The Second Coming of Christ

The Resurrection of the Christ Within You

A revelatory commentary on the original teachings of Jesus

1263

Sri Sri Paramahansa Yogananda

Yogoda Satsanga Society of India
FOUNDED 1917
Paramahansa Yogananda

Vol. II

7263

T.A.B.B.S. REFUGEE HIGH SCHOOL

PARAMAHANSA YOGANANDA
"The Last Smile"
(One hour before his passing, March 7, 1952)

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A revelatory commentary on the original teachings of Jesus

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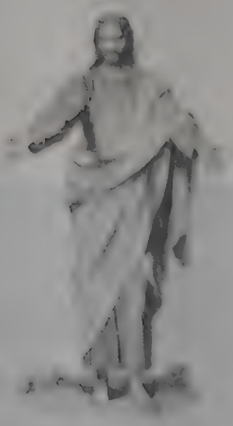

DISCOURSE 42

Jesus Performs the Miracle of the Loaves and the Fishes, and Walks on the Sea of Galilee

Miracles: How Masters Work With Subtle Forces From the Astral and Causal Planes of Creation

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Jesus' Use of the Powers of Mind and Life Energy in Feeding the Five Thousand

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From Material to Divine Consciousness: Yoga and the Mystery of the Breath

"When man understands scientifically the spiritual nature of creation and the mastery over its underlying laws possessed by illumined souls, he can accept not only the possibility of miracles, but that there are numerous ways by which they can be performed."

At that time Herod the tetrarch heard of the fame of Jesus, and said unto his servants, "This is John the Baptist; he is risen from the dead; and therefore mighty works do shew forth themselves in him." For Herod had laid hold on John, and bound him, and put him in prison ...and beheaded John in the prison....

And his disciples came, and took up the body, and buried it, and went and told Jesus. When Jesus heard of it, he departed thence by ship into a desert place apart: and when the people had heard thereof, they followed him on foot out of the cities.

*—Matthew 14:1–3, 10, 12–13**

After these things Jesus went over the sea of Galilee, which is the sea of Tiberias. And a great multitude followed him, because they saw his miracles which he did on them that were diseased. And Jesus went up into a mountain, and there he sat with his disciples. And the passover, a feast of the Jews, was nigh.

When Jesus then lifted up his eyes, and saw a great company come unto him, he saith unto Philip, "Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?" And this he said to prove him: for he himself knew what he would do.

Philip answered him, "Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little."

One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, saith unto him, "There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes: but what are they among so many?"

And Jesus said, "Make the men sit down." Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand.

And Jesus took the loaves; and when he had given thanks, he distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them that were set down; and likewise of the fishes as much as they would.

When they were filled, he said unto his disciples, "Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost." There-

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* See Discourse 34 for the complete story of the death of John the Baptist.

fore they gathered them together, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves, which remained over and above unto them that had eaten.

Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, "This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world." When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone. And when even was now come, his disciples went down unto the sea, and entered into a ship, and went over the sea toward Capernaum. And it was now dark, and Jesus was not come to them.

And the sea arose by reason of a great wind that blew. So when they had rowed about five and twenty or thirty furlongs, they see Jesus walking on the sea, and drawing nigh unto the ship: and they were afraid.

But he saith unto them, "It is I; be not afraid."

—John 6:1–20

And Peter answered him and said, "Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water."

And he said, "Come."

And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus. But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, "Lord, save me."

And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" And when they were come into the ship, the wind ceased. Then they that were in the ship came and worshipped him, saying, "Of a truth thou art the Son of God."

—Matthew 14:28–33

Then they willingly received him into the ship: and immediately the ship was at the land whither they went.

—John 6:21

DISCOURSE 42

Jesus Performs the Miracle of the Loaves and the Fishes, and Walks on the Sea of Galilee

After these things Jesus went over the sea of Galilee, which is the sea of Tiberias. And a great multitude followed him, because they saw his miracles which he did on them that were diseased. And Jesus went up into a mountain, and there he sat with his disciples. And the passover, a feast of the Jews, was nigh.*

When Jesus then lifted up his eyes, and saw a great company come unto him, he saith unto Philip, "Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?" And this he said to prove him: for he himself knew what he would do.

Philip answered him, "Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little."†

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* "After these things...": The immediately preceding verses in St. John's Gospel recount the healing of the man at the pool of Bethesda, discussed in Discourse 21. Since then nearly a year had passed, the events of which are not recorded in the book of John. Based on accounts in the other Gospels, "after these things" may be read as referring to Jesus' sending forth his disciples to preach the Gospel, during which time John the Baptist was slain by Herod.

The Sea of Galilee was also called the Sea of Tiberias, after the town by that name on its western shore.

† "Two hundred pennyworth": two hundred *denarii* (one *denarius* was a day's wage for the common man).

One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, saith unto him, "There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes: but what are they among so many?"

And Jesus said, "Make the men sit down." Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand.

And Jesus took the loaves; and when he had given thanks, he distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them that were set down; and likewise of the fishes as much as they would.

When they were filled, he said unto his disciples, "Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost." Therefore they gathered them together, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves, which remained over and above unto them that had eaten (John 6:1–13).

Parallel reference:

And the apostles, when they were returned, told him all that they had done. And he took them, and went aside privately into a desert place belonging to the city called Bethsaida. And the people, when they knew it, followed him: and he received them, and spake unto them of the kingdom of God, and healed them that had need of healing.

And when the day began to wear away, then came the twelve, and said unto him, "Send the multitude away, that they may go into the towns and country round about, and lodge, and get victuals: for we are here in a desert place."

But he said unto them, "Give ye them to eat." And they said, "We have no more but five loaves and two fishes; except we should go and buy meat for all this people." For they were about five thousand men. And he said to his disciples, "Make them sit down by fifties in a company." And they did so, and made them all sit down.

*Then he took the five loaves and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, he blessed them, and brake, and gave to the disciples to set before the multitude. And they did eat, and were all filled: and there was taken up of fragments that remained to them twelve baskets (Luke 9:10–17).**

* Cf. additional parallel references in Matthew 14:14–21 and Mark 6:32–44.

According to the physical laws governing the universe, it would be impossible to apportion a meager five loaves and two fishes to satisfy the hunger of five thousand people. How did Jesus perform this miracle?

Miracles: how masters work with subtle forces from the astral and causal planes of creation

A miracle is a super-law in operation—the effectual working of subtle powers from the manifesting principles of God's astral and causal realms of creation. How these subtle forces support and impinge on physical phenomena is unknown to ordinary persons. The incomprehensibility of the miracles recorded in the Bible thus reduces otherwise intelligent minds to blind dogmatism or scornful scepticism. But why should there be cause for doubt when Nature constantly excites man with new revelations? Jesus prophesied: "Greater works than these shall ye do."* He knew that the law of cause and effect was creating in this world an evolution of consciousness through which future generations would possess in incremental measure the means to bring about accomplishments theretofore considered miraculous. Amazing advancement will be witnessed as this present ascending evolutionary cycle continues toward its apex.† Scientific and spiritual knowledge will work more and more in harmony and ultimately in unity when humanity will gain the knowledge of the subtle laws that operate in the inner cosmos of consciousness. The spiritually evolved human being, gaining access to the microcosm of the spiritual eye, dissolves delusion's vibratory boundaries encapsulating the physical universe and brings on earth the superphysical capabilities of heaven.

Already many of Jesus' phenomenal feats can be deemed credible because of modern physics, at least in defining principles long known to masters who manipulate these cosmic formulas as easily as a scientist mixes elemental substances to create new compounds in his laboratory. Avant-gardes of science, true seers in their fields, have pried open the agelong-sealed core of the sacrosanct grossness of matter to reveal its electromagnetic structure, and to glimpse the startling won-

* "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me (becomes more attuned to the universal intelligence of Christ Consciousness), the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do" (John 14:12; see Discourse 70).

† See *yugas* in glossary.

ders of matter sublimated into scintillas of light metamorphosing into consciousness, mind-stuff.

"What impresses our senses as matter is really a great concentration of energy into a comparatively small space," writes Professor Einstein.* And the renowned astrophysicist Sir Arthur Stanley Eddington explains: "The world we see and experience in everyday life is simply a convenient mirage attuned to our very limited senses, an illusion conjured by our perceptions and our mind. All that is around us (including our own bodies) which appears so substantial is ultimately nothing but ephemeral networks of particle-waves whirling around at lightning speed, colliding, rebounding, disintegrating into almost total emptiness—so-called matter is mostly emptiness, proportionately as void as intergalactic space, void of anything except occasional dots and spots and scattered electric charges."†

In *The Mysterious Universe,*‡ Cambridge University physicist Sir James Jeans declares: "Today there is a wide measure of agreement, which on the physical side of science approaches almost to unanimity, that the stream of knowledge is heading toward a non-mechanical reality; the universe begins to look more like a great thought than like a great machine. Mind no longer appears as an accidental intruder into the realm of matter; we are beginning to suspect that we ought rather to hail it as the creator and governor of the realm of matter—not of course our individual minds, but the mind in which the atoms out of which our individual minds have grown to exist as thoughts....

"The old dualism of mind and matter...seems likely to disappear, not through matter becoming in any way more shadowy or insubstantial than heretofore, or through mind becoming resolved into a function of the working of matter, but through substantial matter resolving itself into a creation and manifestation of mind."

"To put the conclusion crudely, the stuff of the world is mind-stuff," Eddington summarizes.§ Boldly forthright about the limitations of merely material investigations, he has written: "In regard to the nature of things, [scientific] knowledge is only an empty shell—a

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* Albert Einstein and Leopold Infeld, *The Evolution of Physics: The Growth of Ideas from Early Concepts to Relativity and Quanta* (Cambridge University Press, 1938).

† *The Nature of the Physical World* (Cambridge University Press, 1928).

‡ Cambridge University Press, 1930.

§ *The Nature of the Physical World* (Cambridge University Press, 1928).

form of symbols. It is knowledge of structural form, and not knowledge of content. All through the physical world runs that unknown content, which must surely be the stuff of our consciousness. Here is a hint of aspects deep within the world of physics, and yet unattainable by the methods of physics."*

When man understands scientifically the spiritual nature of creation and the mastery over its underlying laws possessed by illumined souls, he can accept not only the possibility of miracles, but that there are numerous ways by which they can be performed, as noted in the various modes of healing employed by Jesus.

As to feeding the five thousand, one of the methods Jesus would have found effective is mental suggestion or mass hypnosis. A very powerful mind can impose on the mental processes of a crowd a belief in any suggested phenomena. Those who fall under such influence do not become unconscious in all their other faculties and areas of reason, but are susceptible only to the particular suggestion of the hypnotist. If someone with very powerful magnetism impresses on a hungry person the positive thought that his stomach is full and his appetite satisfied, the feeling of hunger will vanish. Professor James of Harvard demonstrated that it is possible to produce actual blisters on the skin by the power of hypnotic suggestion. Mind is the main mechanism in the body. Once the mind becomes convinced about a thing, the body reacts accordingly. So Jesus, with his tremendous will power, could have used mass hypnosis to satisfy the hunger of the five thousand; but I doubt that he even considered it!

Jesus' use of the powers of mind and life energy in feeding the five thousand

Jesus instructed his disciples to see that the people were comfortably seated on the grass-carpeted ground, from which they would receive some magnetism of the earth. Jesus then took the loaves and fishes and gave thanks to God, "and looking up to heaven, he blessed them"—he charged the offering of food with condensed

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* *Space, Time and Gravitation: An Outline of the General Relativity Theory* (Cambridge University Press, 1920).

Speaking about methods of attaining a deeper insight into nature than that afforded by material science, Professor Brian D. Josephson of Cambridge University, winner of the Nobel Prize in physics in 1973, commended the ancient Hindu systems of philosophy: "Vedanta and Sankhya hold the key to the laws of mind and thought process, which are correlated to the quantum field, i.e., the operation and distribution of particles at atomic and molecular levels." *(Publisher's Note)*

cosmic energy drawn from the astral region through his spiritual eye, so that even small portions were a satisfying meal.

By his magnetic energy, Jesus also charged the partakers of the repast with magnetism, so that the cosmic energy he cast into the hungry stomachs of the multitudes opened the sluice gates of the reservoirs of energy in their brains and flesh, assuring no dearth of satisfaction.

After the miracle, the disciples gathered up and filled twelve baskets with leftover morsels, evidence that Jesus actually materialised additional bread and fishes even as the blessed food was being distributed.

Though bread is made by man and fish is caught by him from the ocean or lake, the wheat and the fish, and all things, were originally special creations by God, brought into being by His divine will and Cosmic Creative Energy. While science has proved the quiddity of the universe as electromagnetic radiations, coalesced into various forms, it has yet to devise instruments subtle enough to register the underlying source of electromagnetic phenomena: finer-than-atomic astral life energy and even finer thoughtrons, vibrations of an infinite consciousness. Masters such as Jesus know creation as God knows it and can manipulate intelligent cosmic energy to create at will any desired effect from its primal cause.

In dreams, the mind of every person uses thought and life energy to become a prolific creator. Dreams are condensed thoughts, made visible by the life energy withdrawn from the sensory organs into the brain during sleep. In the world created in his dream state, a sleeper can plant wheat, raise it, harvest it, grind it, and bake it into bread. He can eat of the dream bread, taste it, feel its fresh texture in his mouth. But all things in that dream—the seed, the soil, the oven, the bread, the body that eats and enjoys it—are only modifications of the dreamer's consciousness.

Suppose a person dreams of five thousand people and has only five dream loaves of bread to feed them. If he has the power of conscious dreaming, he can command his mind, "Since these five loaves are only materialisations of my thoughts, I shall multiply them by visualization until I have adequate to serve all the people." To produce dreams consciously and at will is one of the first powers attained by the advancing yogi. An accomplished master perceives how God has condensed His creative thoughts to produce all phenomena of this dream world, and by the cosmic hypnosis of *maya* has suggested those dreams so powerfully to our human consciousness that we accept the cosmic chimera as material reality.

Jesus had the power to condense his thoughts not only as visible mental images as does an ordinary dreamer, but as material dream-realities, even as God does. By the command of his divinely attuned will, he could cause the cosmic energy to condense into electrons, protons, atoms, and molecules of any kind, of any density and specific gravity, informed into whatsoever he willed. After his crucifixion, he re-created his body; thus it was a simple matter for him to create a few more loaves of bread—the process is the same. He had only to command electromagnetic radiations to multiply the food as the five thousand people were consuming it. Such feats can be done by anyone who has complete mastery of the mind. Mind is everything.

If a small eyedropper were connected to a large reservoir of water, the eyedropper would continuously drip one drop of water at a time. Thousands of persons could drink of that water even though the water came in tiny drops, but continuously. The five loaves and two fishes, broken up into tiny fragments, were charged continuously with the replicating power of the creative lifetronic energy drawn by Jesus from the infinite reservoir of the astral realm—morsel by morsel, until all were fed.

From the story of the loaves and the fishes, we see also the practicality and precision of Jesus, who always looked to the comfort of the people. Lest anyone be bypassed in the disarray of the throng during the distribution of the food, he had his disciples divide the multitude by fifties, throughout the grassy area. In instructing his disciples to gather up all remnants after everyone had eaten, he was not only stressing economy in not wasting bounty given by God, but also citing the reverence with which one should treat blessed food (referred to in India as *prasad*), which on this occasion was a special creation of God.*

Is a vegetarian diet necessary for spiritual progress?

It is evident that according to the custom and food supply of the time, Jesus did not sponsor strict vegetarianism. The cultivation of fruits, grains, and vegetables was relatively sparse in the desert places where he preached. His mission on earth did not require him to be a nutritionist, but to saturate people with God-consciousness.

* The Gospels relate a recurrence of this miracle when Jesus later fed four thousand people with seven loaves and a few fishes (Matthew 15:32–39 and Mark 8:1–9, 14–21).

It is true that those who are yet in the developmental stage of spiritual discipline ought to favor a vegetarian diet. But to great masters who have attained God-consciousness, dietary restrictions have little meaning; they see the whole world as nothing but the manifestation of God's ideas. To them, all forms of physical experiences are but the different acts of consciousness under the influence of the cosmic dream. To the man of realization, the very consciousness of giving reality to any form of diet is delusion. He who has awakened from the dream delusion of the cosmos realizes he is Spirit; his mortal body and its physical experiences existing only as amorphous ideas of consciousness.

Nevertheless, the various forms of diet and their dissimilar effects on the body should not be brashly denied. Theorizing about the delusive nature of the body, while simultaneously supporting the delusion by gratifying hunger and engaging in other activities that reinforce body consciousness, is quite incongruous. When an individual achieves spiritual ecstasy and God-contact, there will be no vitiation of his realization that the universe with all its experiences is God's dream, dreaming through him. Until the spiritual aspirant reaches that state of release from all delusive compulsions, he needs to lead a life of spiritual discipline, observing the more healthful vegetarian diet—and other health-maintaining behaviours—to keep the body fit for meditation and spiritual service to God. Persons who claim to possess the realization of sainthood and on those false credentials flaunt the ordinary rules of a salutary physical and spiritual life are courting an inescapable rebuff from the karmic law.

Jesus had said before, that he, the bridegroom, the divine master, and his disciples did not need to fast for spiritual purification from the consciousness of the body, as they were already saturated with transcendent consciousness. But he also added that when his physical presence would be taken away, the disciples would have to adhere to a life of stricter discipline in order to retain attunement with his spiritual vibrations.*

Great teachers adopt the lifestyle and some of the customs of the place and time in which they incarnate; it does not mean that every detail of their way of life is forever sanctified for all generations to follow! Some persons reason, "Jesus partook of meat and wine, therefore I should do the same." But I say to them, first become like Jesus; then whatever you ingest in that consciousness is pure Spirit and as

* See Discourse 32.

such will have no ill effects. For non-illumined body-bound persons, a diet reliant on animal products contributes heavily to many sicknesses, including heart disease and cancer; it is detrimental to physical, psychological, and spiritual health. If people were to follow a proper vegetarian diet, many of the fatal diseases most prevalent in modern civilisation would be gone.

Whatever diet people follow, their prayer and affirmation should be: "Heavenly Father, teach us to realize that we live by Thy consciousness; that birthless and deathless we are waves of Thine infinite ocean of life, of Thine immortal energy and immutable consciousness."

> *Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, "This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world." When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone (John 6:14–15).*

Parallel reference:

> *And straightway Jesus constrained his disciples to get into a ship, and to go before him unto the other side, while he sent the multitudes away. And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, he was there alone (Matthew 14:22–23).*

66"The prophet that should come into the world" was a reference to Moses' foretelling in Deuteronomy 18:15: "The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken."

Many of the Jewish people expected that the coming prophet, or Messiah, would also be an earthly ruler of the royal house of David.* Jesus had no wish to be declared a king of a temporal material kingdom; being one with God, he was already a Prince of the Universe, a true king above all kingdoms of the earth.

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* See, for example, II Samuel 7:12–17; I Chronicles 17:11–15; Daniel 9:25–26. See also Discourse 36.

The periodic withdrawal of Jesus into solitude [as explained in Discourses 7 and 25] was a necessary retreat from the demands of the multitudes. God does not need to pray or meditate, because He is omnipresent and is seeking nothing beyond Himself. He is engrossed in His joy and need not attain any higher state than His own consciousness. The transcendent liberated master enjoys that same blissful freedom; still he may seclude himself for solitary prayer and meditation to recharge his mortal body, which is needed for his work on earth. In this instance, Jesus also sought to escape a cordon of enthusiasts to disabuse them of their notion to make him their king.

And when even was now come, his disciples went down unto the sea, and entered into a ship, and went over the sea toward Capernaum. And it was now dark, and Jesus was not come to them.

And the sea arose by reason of a great wind that blew. So when they had rowed about five and twenty or thirty furlongs, they see Jesus walking on the sea, and drawing nigh unto the ship: and they were afraid.

But he saith unto them, "It is I; be not afraid."

Then they willingly received him into the ship: and immediately the ship was at the land whither they went (John 6:16–21).

Parallel reference:

But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary. And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, "It is a spirit"; and they cried out for fear. But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, "Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid" (Matthew 14:24–27).

66 Be not fearful but elated that you are able to witness this miracle of God working through me; that I, not as a spirit, but with my solid natural body, can walk on this rough sea and speak to you with the voice you know well. It is I, the same as you have always seen me, with the same physical body. The Spirit in me is your

Redeemer from all earthly troubles, even from these wind-surged waves that are carelessly tossing you about. Why should my appearance in this way cause you to be afraid?"

Jesus' mastery over the electronic composition of matter and its relation to consciousness

As with the materialisation of the loaves and fishes, walking over water, as Jesus did in view of his disciples, is a miracle that can be performed when one understands the electronic composition of matter and its relation to mind. A master who by actual realization perceives the entire cosmos as a dream of God, and all matter as condensed lifetronic light and consciousness, rises above the laws governing material creation and can modify any material object by his divinely attuned creative will.

The human mind is deluded into thinking that liquid will drown man's solid body, gas will choke him, solids will hurt him; but as soon as that delusion is gone, he can do anything he wants to with matter. He realizes that the whole world is energy, as scientists tell us.

Man thinks of his mortal form as solid flesh and bone. That is a concrete delusion. The body is an amalgam of countless infinitesimal subatomic particles; these particles are made up of finer-than-atomic lifetronic energy and ultimately of thoughtrons, sparks of consciousness whose source is Cosmic Consciousness.

Everything existing in nature is energy in a more or less compact stage of vibration, exhibiting weight according to its mass or distinguishing gravitation. In the material world, liquid vibration, such as water, will sink a solid vibration, such as the human body, whose density gives it a specific gravity* greater than the liquid. Jesus realized that the energy composing the solid body has specific gravity only because of its compact formation, as also the specific gravity of the less dense mass of the liquid vibration of the sea. Specific gravity is delusion because the density of matter is reducible to its quintessence of energy (weightless, permeable light). Human consciousness that transcends this delusion perceives the physical body as essentially

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*The term used in physics to denote the ratio of the density of a substance to that of a standard substance (which is usually water for solids and liquids, and dry air for gases). "Buoyancy is intimately related to specific gravity," explains *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. "If a substance has specific gravity less than that of a fluid, it will float on that fluid: helium-filled balloons will rise in air, oil will form a slick on water, and lead will float on mercury." ***(Publisher's Note)***

ethereal, infinitely united to and consisting of the same substance as the Cosmic Body of God: energy, mind, Spirit.

In *Autobiography of a Yogi* I have devoted an entire chapter to a comprehensive explanation of "The Law of Miracles." Modern science has gratifyingly supplied terms and processes of cosmic laws that, intentionally or reluctantly, formulate a science of the age-old art of miracles known alike to generations of Vedic, Biblical, and contemporary masters. Let me quote an extract from the book apropos to this present Discourse:

> From science, then, if it must be so, let man learn the philosophic truth that there is no material universe; its warp and woof is *maya,* illusion. Under analysis all its mirages of reality dissolve....
>
> In his famous equation outlining the equivalence of mass and energy, Einstein proved that the energy in any particle of matter is equal to its mass or weight multiplied by the square of the velocity of light. The release of the atomic energies is brought about through annihilation of the material particles. The "death" of matter has given birth to an Atomic Age.
>
> Light velocity is a mathematical standard or constant not because there is an absolute value in 186,300 miles a second, but because no material body, whose mass increases with its velocity, can ever attain the velocity of light. Stated another way: only a material body whose mass is infinite could equal the velocity of light.
>
> This conception brings us to the law of miracles.
>
> Masters who are able to materialise and dematerialise their bodies and other objects, and to move with the velocity of light, and to utilize the creative light rays in bringing into instant visibility any physical manifestation, have fulfilled the lawful condition: their mass is infinite.
>
> The consciousness of a perfected yogi is effortlessly identified not with a narrow body but with the universal structure. Gravitation, whether the "force" of Newton or the Einsteinian "manifestation of inertia," is powerless to *compel* a master to exhibit the property of weight: the distinguishing gravitational condition of all material objects. He who knows himself as the omnipresent Spirit is subject no longer to the rigidities of a body in time and space. The imprisoning "rings-pass-not" have yielded to the solvent: *I am He.*

The cohesive property of *maya's* creative vibration holds together every iota of matter sporting its presence in the universe. Sand mixed

with water and fashioned into a sand man looks enduringly solid; but when the water is evaporated out of it, that illusion falls apart. Likewise, the illusion of a seemingly solid human form is held together by the adhesive power of delusion working through the mind.

The relationship between consciousness and the body is such that at death the body disintegrates because the mind and consciousness depart; but as long as consciousness remains in the body it works hard to hold together the atoms, cells, and organs—in spite of the effects of disease and aging. The body's mass of dancing electrons—light, energy—when compacted and integrated by mind as a creative sensory instrument of *maya,* suggests itself as a solid entity. Applying the physical processes described by Einstein, however, scientists could convert the body into its constituent energy; but they lack the ability to do it by mind power, as Jesus did. A master who realizes that the mind controls the body, and who possesses complete control over the mind, can partially or fully disintegrate the atoms of the body—changing its specific gravity or completely dematerialising it—and then restore the bodily composition to its customary solidity at will.

Superconscious realization that the body is made of informed energy, a dream image of mind-stuff, instantly frees one from the delusion of specific gravity; without the density of mass, there is no weight. But as long as the conviction of corporeal solidity persists in one's mind, the body will surely sink if one tries to walk on the unsupportive lesser density of a body of water.

If a sleeping man dreams he is drowning, his consciousness would suffer a painful sense of suffocation. But if he knew the art of controlling his dreams at will, he could save his dream self simply by changing his dream thoughts to behold his dream body floating safely on the dream waters. Jesus, perceiving his body, the sea, and the conglomerate world as differentiated dream waves of consciousness manifesting as various electromagnetic waves of material forms, could by mere willing change the specific gravity or the electronic composition of his body so that weightlessly it could walk on water as naturally as the solid body of an ordinary man strides the solid earth.

A small cork tied to a heavy piece of iron will be submerged if dropped in a pot of water; but if the cork were separated from the iron, it would float. The body is similarly weighted down with material consciousness. When *maya's* illusions of the perdurability of matter are disengaged from the body by meditation, the body can dance

on water, walk through solid substances, levitate or fly in the air at will. As easily as any person can change his thoughts, a superman can change his experience of the world just by changing his material convictions into intuitive divine realizations. Among the yogis of India that I have personally known to demonstrate these truths was the saintly Nagendra Nath Bhaduri, about whom I have written in my *Autobiography of a Yogi.**

The *Kriya Yoga* meditation techniques of *pranayama,* life-force control that transmutes breath into subtle lifetronic energy, bring positive realization that the composition of the body is pure cosmic energy. In the adept practice of *Kriya,* the body is oxygenated and its atoms etherealized until it becomes light as a feather. Man has no idea how much power comes into the body when he has mastered the mystery of the breath. *Kriya* practice brings a regulated, continuous inflow of oxygen

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* Chapter 7, "The Levitating Saint." Many Christian saints, including Teresa of Avila and Joseph of Cupertino, have similarly exhibited miraculous powers of levitation and weightlessness. The Catholic scholar Monsignor Albert Farges writes in *Mystical Phenomena* (London: Burns, Oates, and Washbourne, 1926):

"In spite of the strangeness of these facts, they cannot be doubted. Not only are they perfectly authentic, but, moreover, frequent in the lives of ecstatic saints....They have often been discussed and verified in the processes of canonization....

"St. Francis seems to have been the first stigmatic and also the first ecstatic whose spontaneous elevation above the ground was officially confirmed, but since that time verifications have been multiplied. Here are some instances:

"St. Peter of Alcantara was unable to hear the lofty words of St. John, *Verbum cara factum est* ['The Word was made flesh'], pronounced without falling into ecstasy and being raised above the earth. The Franciscan, Biagio of Caltanisetta, went into ecstasy simply at the names of Jesus and Mary, and, enraptured with their beauty, sprang into the air. Blessed Giles, of the Order of St. Dominic, remained suspended in the air in ecstasy for whole nights without it being possible to bring him back to earth...St. Thomas of Villanova, whilst preaching one day in his cathedral, suddenly went into ecstasy and remained suspended in the air for twelve hours."

The levitations of seventeenth-century St. Joseph of Cupertino are among the most famous. The London *Times* reported on March 24, 2003: "In a message marking the 400th anniversary of the birth of St. Joseph, the Pope said that the Franciscan friar, who was said to amaze congregations by levitating and flying through the air, was spiritually close to our times. He is the patron saint of aviators and students....Witnesses record that after falling into an ecstatic trance, St. Joseph would utter a loud cry and soar into the air, sometimes flying down the nave and sometimes flying out of the church and across the hills for several miles. He was put on trial by the Inquisition, but when he flew over the heads of his inquisitors, the judges referred the case directly to the Pope, Urban VIII. The Pope dropped the case after apparently witnessing an 'ecstatic flight.' Numerous important people, including Frederick, Duke of Brunswick, and Prince Casimir of Poland testified to having seen the flights." *(Publisher's Note)*

into the body, the atoms of which, by the process of *pranayama,* are transmuted into life force, reinforcing the subtle currents in the spine, which in turn awaken the astral cerebrospinal centres and spiritualize the entire body. After years of successful practice, the body of the advanced *Kriya Yogi* becomes so spiritualized that in exalted states he can hardly feel it touch the ground. The suffusion of life force becomes so powerful that the whole body loses its delusive solidity and actually levitates. I can testify to that from my own experience. But the beginner should not expect to jump weightless tomorrow! Modern man is accustomed to getting results quickly; his industry and technology manufactures products so rapidly that he thinks there should be a convenience package of concise spiritual progress as well. A presumption of instant spiritual achievement is perhaps more than a bit audacious considering the innumerable lifetimes already spent in making oneself an unspiritual being. Even a lifelong practice is little to be required. Nevertheless, the *Kriya Yoga* science and art of meditation are not drudgery, because gradual transforming results are felt from the very beginning.

From material to divine consciousness: yoga and the mystery of the breath

All this has been explained by the great yogis of India.* Jesus Christ certainly had mastered that yoga science, by which he converted the vibratory density of his body into weightless light. Most persons do not live the truth in the Bible; they are satisfied with mere theological belief or their own philosophical vagaries, which get them nowhere. If one follows the scientific spiritual way, the results are

* In his *Yoga Sutras,* Patanjali devotes an entire section to the obtaining of miraculous powers (known as *siddhis* or *vibhutis*) by mastery of the yoga science—in particular, by *samyama,* a coalescence of the last three steps of the Eightfold Path: *dharana* (concentration), *dhyana* (meditation), and *samadhi* (divine union). Among the powers mentioned are levitation and the ability to walk on water or mire without sinking (*Yoga Sutras* III:40), as well as the ability to exercise the eight *aishvaryas* (ascetical majesties; see Discourse 70) and to perfect the body so that its functions are unaffected by the properties of earth, water, fire, air, ether—the solid, liquid, fiery, gaseous, and ethereal phases of matter (*Yoga Sutras* III:45–46).

In *Sutra* III:38, Patanjali warns the sincere seeker of God-union that the use of phenomenal powers is an obstacle, tempting the yogi to egotistical pride and distracting him from the true Goal. The advancing devotee is careful to shun the use of any supernatural powers he might attain, or to employ them only when he is certain of divine permission. After becoming irrevocably established in *samadhi,* of course, the perfected yogi is guided by God's wisdom; he then exercises the *siddhis* or refrains from doing so entirely according to the inner promptings of the Divine Will.

definite and can be proved by one's own transition from mortal consciousness to divine consciousness.

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And Peter answered him and said, "Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water."

And he said, "Come."

And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus. But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, "Lord, save me."

*And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" And when they were come into the ship, the wind ceased. Then they that were in the ship came and worshipped him, saying, "Of a truth thou art the Son of God."**

And when they were gone over, they came into the land of Gennesaret. And when the men of that place had knowledge of him, they sent out into all that country round about, and brought unto him all that were diseased; and besought him that they might only touch the hem of his garment: and as many as touched were made perfectly whole (Matthew 14:28–36).

Peter, by the power of faith and mental concentration, became momentarily attuned to the consciousness of Christ, free from the material dream-delusion of matter. Thus he was buoyed by divine consciousness when he stepped out of the ship to approach Jesus. But when the violent winds shook Peter's concentrated faith with fear, his habit of beholding matter as real came back into his mind and immediately he felt his body sinking.

Spiritual advancement brings faith realization of the immaterial nature of the body

Jesus' touch restored the disciple's faith and brought him to safety. But he scolded Peter for his precarious spiritual instability: "O Peter, why did you diminish with doubt your Self-realization, your intuition-born, Christ Consciousness–stimulated faith, and revive your consciousness of matter? Unless your faith

* Cf. parallel reference in Mark 6:47–52.

remains always firm in your Christ attunement with Cosmic Consciousness, the steady realization that God is all, you will repeatedly contradict your divine perceptions with frightful experiences of delusive matter."*

By *faith* Jesus did not mean mere mental belief, which evaporates at the slightest contact with contrary evidence. Faith is absolute conviction; its proof lies in the intuitive knowing of the soul. God-consciousness and its unlimited powers are available to those ardent devotees who steadily develop themselves by meditation until they form an unwavering faith in the omnipotent nature of God and His manifestation in themselves.

One who is always conscious of the body is not conscious of Spirit. In sleep bodily consciousness is forcibly, though temporarily, cast off from the soul. But in meditation the delusion of the body is consciously removed; and during ecstasy attained in deeper states of meditation, the devotee acquires real faith—a deep intuitive realization—about the electromagnetic, lifetronic, and mental nature of the body. The more advanced one is on the spiritual path, the greater is his faith or meditation-born conviction about the immaterial nature of matter and his own body.†

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* "He whose consciousness is not shaken by anxiety under afflictions nor by attachment to happiness under favourable circumstances; he who is free from worldly loves, fears, and angers—he is called a *muni* [God-knowing sage] of steady discrimination" (*God Talks With Arjuna: The Bhagavad Gita* II:56).

† The great novelist Leo Tolstoy wrote a delightful folk tale, *The Three Hermits*. His friend Nicholas Roerich summarized it, as follows:

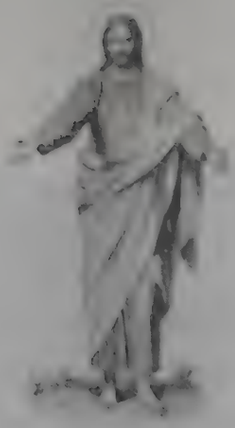
"On an island there lived three old hermits. They were so simple that the only prayer they used was: 'We are three; Thou art Three—have mercy on us!' Great miracles were manifested during this naive prayer.

"The local bishop came to hear about the three hermits and their inadmissible prayer, and decided to visit them in order to teach them the canonical invocations. He arrived on the island, told the hermits that their heavenly petition was undignified, and taught them many of the customary prayers. The bishop then left on a boat. He saw, following the ship, a radiant light. As it approached he discerned the three hermits, who were holding hands and running upon the waves in an effort to overtake the vessel.

"'We have forgotten the prayers you taught us,' they cried as they reached the bishop, 'and have hastened to ask you to repeat them.' The awed bishop shook his head.

"'Dear ones,' he replied humbly, 'continue to live with your old prayer!'"

(The story apparently has a historical basis; an editorial note informs us that the bishop met the three hermits while he was sailing from Archangel to the Slovetsky Monastery, at the mouth of the Dvina River.)—*Autobiography of a Yogi*, Chapter 30.



DISCOURSE 43

The True "Bread of Life"

How One Can "Work the Works of God"

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The Christ Intelligence:
"Bread From Heaven," the Divine Sustenance of All Creation

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Earthly and Spiritual Hunger Satisfied Forever
by Partaking of Christ Consciousness

❖

Did Jesus Promise Salvation to All Who "Believeth on Him"?

❖

Doubt-Filled Materialistic Persons Cannot Know God or Christ

❖

"Eat My Flesh":
Nourish One's Life With the "Bread" of Christ Consciousness

❖

"Drink My Blood":
Absorb the Immortalizing Cosmic Energy or Holy Ghost Vibration

❖

Jesus Spoke Cryptically; But Rightly Interpreted, His Words
"Are Spirit, and They Are Life"

"Any one of you who by deep meditation absorbs in his consciousness the Christ Consciousness (bread) will find his life united to eternal life."

The day following, when the people which stood on the other side of the sea saw that there was none other boat there, save that one whereinto his disciples were entered, and that Jesus went not with his disciples into the boat, but that his disciples were gone away alone; (howbeit there came other boats from Tiberias nigh unto the place where they did eat bread, after that the Lord had given thanks:)

When the people therefore saw that Jesus was not there, neither his disciples, they also took shipping, and came to Capernaum, seeking for Jesus. And when they had found him on the other side of the sea, they said unto him, "Rabbi, when camest thou hither?"

Jesus answered them and said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled. Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed."

Then said they unto him, "What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?"

Jesus answered and said unto them, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom He hath sent."

They said therefore unto him, "What sign shewest thou then, that we may see, and believe thee? What dost thou work? Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written, 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'"

Then Jesus said unto them, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world."

Then said they unto him, "Lord, evermore give us this bread."

And Jesus said unto them, "I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.

"But I said unto you, that ye also have seen me, and believe not. All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of Him that sent me. And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which He hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of Him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day."

The Jews then murmured at him, because he said, "I am the bread which came down from heaven." And they said, "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How is it then that he saith, 'I came down from heaven?'"

Jesus therefore answered and said unto them, "Murmur not among yourselves. No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, 'And they shall be all taught of God.' Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me. Not that any man hath seen the Father, save he which is of God, he hath seen the Father.

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me hath everlasting life. I am that bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."

The Jews therefore strove among themselves, saying, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?"

Then Jesus said unto them, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh

my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me. This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever."

These things said he in the synagogue, as he taught in Capernaum. Many therefore of his disciples, when they had heard this, said, "This is an hard saying; who can hear it?"

When Jesus knew in himself that his disciples murmured at it, he said unto them, "Doth this offend you? What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before? It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life. But there are some of you that believe not." For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him.

And he said, "Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father."

From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him. Then said Jesus unto the twelve, "Will ye also go away?"

Then Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God."

Jesus answered them, "Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?" He spake of Judas Iscariot the son of Simon: for he it was that should betray him, being one of the twelve.

—John 6:22–71

Jesus and Peter Walk on Water

And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus. But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, "Lord, save me."

And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?"

—Matthew 14:29–31

Peter, by the power of faith and mental concentration, became momentarily attuned to the consciousness of Christ, free from the material dream-delusion of matter. Thus he was buoyed by divine consciousness when he stepped out of the ship to approach Jesus. But when the violent winds shook Peter's concentrated faith with fear, his habit of beholding matter as real came back into his mind and immediately he felt his body sinking....

By faith *Jesus did not mean mere mental belief, which evaporates at the slightest contact with contrary evidence. Faith is absolute conviction; its proof lies in the intuitive knowing of the soul. God-consciousness and its unlimited powers are available to those ardent devotees who steadily develop themselves by meditation until they form an unwavering faith in the omnipotent nature of God and His manifestation in themselves.*

—Paramahansa Yogananda

Drawing by Heinrich Hofmann

DISCOURSE 43

The True "Bread of Life"

The day following, when the people which stood on the other side of the sea saw that there was none other boat there, save that one whereinto his disciples were entered, and that Jesus went not with his disciples into the boat, but that his disciples were gone away alone; (howbeit there came other boats from Tiberias nigh unto the place where they did eat bread, after that the Lord had given thanks:)

When the people therefore saw that Jesus was not there, neither his disciples, they also took shipping, and came to Capernaum, seeking for Jesus. And when they had found him on the other side of the sea, they said unto him, "Rabbi, when camest thou hither?"

Jesus answered them and said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled. Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed" (John 6:22–27).

Jesus signified to the people: "I feel your thoughts, that you seek me not because my miracles roused in you a desire to find God through me, but because of your interest in the novelty of quelling your hunger with morsels of the divinely produced loaves. I say unto you that it is foolish to concentrate unduly on the perishable subsistence of a perishable body. Rather seek that sustenance 'which endureth unto everlasting life'—the wisdom and ever new bliss of God

that, once acquired, forever satisfy the immortal soul and are its imperishable nourishment. The Spirit within the Son of man (my body) can teach you how to obtain that divine food, 'for him hath God the Father sealed': Transcendental God the Father has vested in the Christ Consciousness all secrets and powers of life; and with that Consciousness incarnate in my body (Son of man) He has ordained me to grant the salvation-giving, immortality-bestowing bread of divine wisdom and bliss to all devotees who strive deeply in meditation to contact the Christ Intelligence in their own souls. This you can learn to do by following the teachings sent through me."*

Then said they unto him, "What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?"

Jesus answered and said unto them, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom He hath sent" (John 6:28–29).

66When there is widespread suffering on earth, God responds to the soul call of His devotees by sending a divine son who by his exemplary spiritual life of expressing Christ Consciousness can teach people to cooperate with His work of salvation in their lives.

How one can "work the works of God"

God's work in creation is to draw, through evolutionary promptings of the Christ Intelligence, all beings back to conscious oneness with Himself. Therefore anyone who wishes to 'work the works of God' should by meditation attune himself with Christ Consciousness manifesting through a God-sent saviour; he would then find himself becoming godlike, furthering the will of God in his own life."

Jesus pointed out that since God had sent him, those who would believe in him and practice his teachings would thereby indeed "work the works of God." He thus emphasized the divine decree that anyone who wants to work God's truth in his life must follow a true guru, a divine emissary—one who has striven for and attained oneness with

* "Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? Hearken diligently unto Me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto Me: hear, and your soul shall live" (Isaiah 55:2–3).

God, and who has been sent by Him to lead others to that liberating consciousness.

*They said therefore unto him, "What sign shewest thou then, that we may see, and believe thee? What dost thou work? Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written, 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'"**

Then Jesus said unto them, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world" (John 6:30–33).

In these words, Jesus elaborated on what he meant when he exhorted the people (in verse 27 above) to seek that nourishment which would give them everlasting life. By "the bread of God" Jesus signified the Christ Intelligence emanating from God, which is present in Cosmic Energy working the work of creation, giving "life unto the world"—the divine sustenance of all animate and inanimate objects and forces in creation.† By this analogy, Jesus was telling the people that through his own presence on earth "my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven," in that he had come to bring to them the way to realize, as did he, that the body is not sustained by ordinary human consciousness but by the infinite Christ Intelligence that is within them, and which gives consciousness and life to all living creatures. Only divine souls such as Jesus, who are sent to earth not merely to uplift people with inspirational teachings but with a distinct mission to manifest the

The Christ Intelligence: "bread from heaven," the divine sustenance of all creation

* Reference to Exodus 16:14–15, 35.

† "In him was life, and the life was the light of men" (John 1:4), explained in Discourse 1. Cosmic Energy guided by the latent Christ Intelligence transmutes itself into different rates of vibration, creating astral living substances and semiconscious life force and potentially conscious electrons, protons, atoms, and molecules, which in turn form themselves into solid, liquid, and gaseous forms constituting the cosmos with its island universes, stellar systems, planetary systems, solar system, the earth and its human inhabitants.

Christ Intelligence and impart it to others, can show devotees the art of expanding their consciousness into that Universal Consciousness.

"By the omniscient insight within me, I declare unto you that Moses gave you spiritual inspiration and divine law, but did not show to the unprepared masses that followed him how to get 'the bread from heaven,' the all-redeeming Christ Intelligence inherent in Cosmic Vibratory Energy. It is the transcendental Cosmic Consciousness present beyond vibratory creation who, as a conscious Personality (my Father), sends to you through me contact with Christ Intelligence, which descended to earth from the infinite heavenly region behind the creative vibrations of Cosmic Energy and became manifested in my human body. Anyone who by meditation will be in tune with my life will be in tune with the everlasting source of life, Christ Intelligence, which is the true 'bread' or Substance that sustains all creation and all living things."

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Then said they unto him, "Lord, evermore give us this bread."

And Jesus said unto them, "I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst" (John 6:34–35).

66 The Christ Intelligence and the enlightened I-Am (the divine ego or spiritualized human consciousness) in me are one; thus the Christ Consciousness in me, being the same as the Infinite Christ, is the source of life and consciousness of all living beings. Because I am ever consciously attuned to the Christ Consciousness manifest in my life, any devotee who comes to me with a receptive attitude and who disciplines his life according to my teachings so that he permanently connects his human consciousness with the Christ Consciousness, which is present within me and within his own soul, shall find all the hunger and cravings of his earthly and spiritual desires fulfilled forever. The devotee who occasionally is in tune with the Christ Consciousness, and who believes or is convinced of being able to unite with that Consciousness and the ever new bliss in it, will find that, unlike the ordinary man, he will no longer thirst for the temporary joys of material effects."

Earthly and spiritual hunger satisfied forever by partaking of Christ Consciousness

It is to be noted that the two phrases "cometh to me" and "believeth on me" have different significance. "He that cometh" signifies a soul who becomes one with Christ Consciousness, and "he that believeth" signifies one who has only occasional contact with Christ Consciousness in meditation.

"But I said unto you, that ye also have seen me, and believe not. All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.† For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of Him that sent me. And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which He hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of Him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day" (John 6:36–40).*

66 But I say unto you that you who have seen only my physical form, and have not felt the Christ Consciousness within it, have not believed as to what I am.

"Whatsoever my Father gives to me, that is what shall come to me. And whosoever comes to me, sent by the Father, and who tunes in his devotion and attention with my consciousness, I will never forsake, no matter how sinful or error-stricken he is. He is my brother, even though unknowingly hiding the image of God's consciousness beneath his temporarily delusion-stricken mind.

Did Jesus promise salvation to all who "believeth on him"?

"I have come from the heavenly realms of my Father to do the will of Him who sent me. Most people come on earth being compelled by the seeds of actions of their past lives. But in this incarnation as

* "The Father Himself, which hath sent me, hath borne witness of me. Ye have neither heard His voice at any time, nor seen His shape. And ye have not His word abiding in you: for whom He hath sent, him ye believe not" (John 5:37–38; see Discourse 21).

† Some modern translators have rendered "All that the Father hath given me..." as "Everyone the father hath given me...." The original Greek has *pan*, which is correctly translated as "all"—not *panta*, which would be translated as "everyone." "Him" in the second part of the sentence is correctly translated as referring to a person.

Jesus, I come not only to demonstrate my own final liberation and immortality in Spirit, but to do the will of my Father in helping others to liberate themselves by showing them in my own life the art of contacting Christ Consciousness and Cosmic Consciousness.

"As the Christ Intelligence in all creation is in tune with the will of God the Father existing beyond creation, so is my will tuned with His will. The will of God the Father vibrates within my human consciousness and intimates to me that all the power of Christ Consciousness that was reflected in me during my earth life must be consciously used by me, without my losing any iota of it during the physical crucifixion of my body, and retained after death when I will lift my Christ Consciousness and unite it with God the Father's Consciousness.

"On the last day, after attaining the final victory over all the karma I have taken on myself in relieving the sins of others, my human consciousness and my resurrected body, having overcome the delusion of crucifixion and being in tune with the ultimate Cosmic Consciousness of God the Father, will also find immortality.

"I will perceive my body not as a part of temporary change, but as an emanation of the Changeless Immortality; and then my body will also dissolve in the Cosmic Consciousness, retaining its individuality, materialising anywhere, anytime, at my will or in response to a real soul-call from a true devotee.

"And this also is the will of God the Father who is the Creator of my body and the Christ Consciousness in it, that every advanced devotee who in the light of his meditation-developed intuition becomes one with the only-reflected (begotten) Son, the Christ Intelligence in creation, and is able to retain that consciousness of unity (believing in the Christ Consciousness attained in meditation), will be lifted up forever on the last day by my universal Self, the Christ Consciousness, when all his stored-up karmic seeds of action in his physical, astral, and causal bodies will be disentangled from around his soul. That liberated soul will find his life forever one with the Everlasting Life."

When Jesus speaks of "everyone which seeth the Son," by the word "seeth" he means the perceptive power of intuition or feeling which can see, hear, smell, taste, or touch without the intermediary of the senses. It is quite evident that all people who saw Jesus Christ during his incarnation on earth were not automatically saved thereby; and there are many Christians today who have yet to be saved by consciously knowing him through intuitive wisdom developed in regular,

deep meditation and divine communion in which the Son or Christ Consciousness is realized.

Jesus was here pointing out to devotees that a mere belief in him without living and realizing his truth in life could not possibly rescue them from the implacable tentacles of cosmic delusion.

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The Jews then murmured at him, because he said, "I am the bread which came down from heaven." And they said, "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How is it then that he saith, 'I came down from heaven?'"

Jesus therefore answered and said unto them, "Murmur not among yourselves. No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, 'And they shall be all taught of God.' Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me. Not that any man hath seen the Father, save he which is of God, he hath seen the Father" (John 6:41–46).*

"Do not murmur or vibrate with doubt, thus distorting the divine understanding I am trying to transmit among you. You are too material to understand who I am.

"You are perplexed because I said, 'I am the bread which came down from heaven.' You all think of your earthly parents as the cause of your human birth, but I know that even though my mortal form was born to the house of Joseph, still my bodily temple and the Christ Intelligence in it came on earth directly through the will of the Father to fulfil a mission of liberating souls.

Doubt-filled materialistic persons cannot know God or Christ

"Although you are so near my body, you cannot 'come to me,' you cannot realize the Christ Intelligence in me. No one who is identified with his mortal consciousness can be one with me in Christ Consciousness. Only devotees who deeply seek God are blessed and are so directed by Him that they find the right teachings and through

* "And all thy children shall be taught of the Lord; and great shall be the peace of thy children" (Isaiah 54:13).

the upliftment of consciousness in meditation go beyond the conscious, subconscious, and superconscious states to be one with the Christ Consciousness. All who are close to my body have good karma by which the Heavenly Father sent you to me. Every devotee who meets a divine personage has been blessed by the Heavenly Father responding to that devotee's spiritual cravings.

"Every devotee who by the earnestness of his spiritual desire and who by deep meditation communes daily with Christ Consciousness, will find, on the day when all his seeds of actions of all lives will be burned in the fire of his Christ-wisdom, that I, the Christ Intelligence present in him, will lift his consciousness from the domain of matter to the kingdom of completely liberating Cosmic Consciousness.

"The prophets of old who communed with God wrote that all those who will come near me will be taught the way of communing with God the Father through Christ Intelligence. Every truth-seeking devotee who has heard the Cosmic Vibration in meditation emanating from the Cosmic Consciousness will learn from that voice of God that he has to feel the Christ Consciousness in all creation before he can finally realize the Cosmic Consciousness beyond all creation.

"But I say unto you, no man who is identified with his body and its limited ego can possibly see or be one with God the Father. Only those attain God-realization who have lifted their inner being from consciousness, subconsciousness, superconsciousness, and Christ Consciousness to Cosmic Consciousness by conscious ecstasy in deep meditation. He who has mastered the art of communing with God the Father by hearing, with the all-perceptive power of his developed soul-intuition, the Cosmic Vibration and feeling the Christ Consciousness in it, is of God and has 'seen' or become one with Cosmic Consciousness, the Father."

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me hath everlasting life. I am that bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world" (John 6:47–51).

66 Verily, through oneness with the Cosmic Consciousness of my Father, I declare unto you all, that the devotee who really believes in the Christ Intelligence by communing with that Infinite Christ within himself in daily deep ecstasy finds his life tuned to everlasting life. The spiritualized human consciousness in me (the 'I-Am' or divine ego of 'I am that bread of life') is one with the Christ Consciousness (bread) which sustains the souls and lives of all.

"Eat my flesh": Nourish one's life with the "bread" of Christ Consciousness

"Your forefathers ate the manna of divine inspiration in the wilderness and still they are dead—that is, their souls have not eternally awakened in wisdom and thus become freed from the human cycle of births and deaths. I know this from my omniscient Christ Consciousness, which knows the history of all souls on earth. The Christ Consciousness (bread), which was hidden behind the heavenly ramparts of Cosmic Energy and is manifest now in my body, can produce deathlessness not only in me, but in all true devotees who can with their human consciousness eat of, or absorb into their consciousness, the omnipresent Infinite Christ.

"I am the living bread which came down from heaven: The I-am human consciousness in me is united with the ever-living Christ Intelligence, which is omnipresent behind the subtle, heavenly screen of the ubiquitous Cosmic Energy and is fully manifested in me. If any devotee continuously nourishes his life with this bread of Christ Intelligence, his life also will be united forever with everlasting life. And the bread, or Christ Intelligence, manifesting as my flesh, or condensed Cosmic Energy, I (the Infinite Christ) will give to the true devotee that he may unite it with the life force in his body (which is the 'life of the world') and thereby realize his own immortality.

"For the masses in general, that they might be stirred to seek awakening of the everlasting life in them, I, Jesus, will sacrifice on the cross my flesh of condensed Cosmic Energy, which after three days will be quickened into Christ Consciousness and immortality."

If a man in a dream foresees that he will be crucified and is then actually crucified in the dream, he realizes on waking that his dream-perceived body, before and after his dream crucifixion, was an inseparable manifestation of his own consciousness. So when Jesus Christ was foretelling that he would give up his flesh in crucifixion as a symbol to the world that sinful material pleasures of the body must

be sacrificed for the attainment of spiritual bliss of the soul and everlasting life, he realized that the Christ Consciousness within his body and the body as well were both everlasting, being nothing but the emanations of one God Consciousness.

The Jews therefore strove among themselves, saying, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?"

Then Jesus said unto them, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me. This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever" (John 6:52–58).

The people were dismayed: "Is this man advocating cannibalism by offering us his flesh?" Jesus persisted, though their doubting materialistic minds were unable to understand his wisdom concealed within the esoteric metaphor:

"Unless the devotee eats and absorbs the 'flesh' of Christ Consciousness hidden in the Son of man, or human body, and drinks and absorbs his 'blood' of vitality-giving Cosmic Energy present also in the body, he cannot feel the everlasting life templed within him.

"Drink my blood": Absorb the immortalizing Cosmic Energy or Holy Ghost Vibration

"Most of you are the living dead, the walking dead; you neither perceive the everlasting life in you nor do you charge your life with the holy vibration of Cosmic Energy and your consciousness with the Christ Consciousness hidden behind your body consciousness.

"Any devotee who by ecstasy can absorb in his human consciousness my Christ Consciousness (flesh) and who can unite his life force in the body with my omnipotent Cosmic Energy (blood), will find his consciousness immortal and his life eternal. For my flesh of

Christ Consciousness present in all souls is the real meat or sustenance that can forever satisfy one's hunger for wisdom—the all-knowingness of divine realization. And my blood of Christ Intelligence–guided Cosmic Energy is the only vitality that can charge human life with immortality, and quench the thirst of all earthly life desires.

"That devotee who by deep ecstatic meditation has absorbed my Christ Consciousness in his human consciousness and recharged his life force with the Christ Consciousness–guided Cosmic Energy is united in his being with Christ Consciousness—'he dwelleth in me and I in him.' As the ever-living God the Father (Cosmic Consciousness present beyond vibratory creation) has 'sent me,' reflected His everlasting life as the Christ Intelligence (present in all vibratory creation), and the Christ Consciousness 'lives by the Father,' Cosmic Consciousness, so also that devotee who absorbs (eateth) the Christ Consciousness finds that his consciousness and life are sustained forever by that Infinite Intelligence, which is equally present in the body of the devotee and my body which is called Jesus.

"This Christ Consciousness is the bread that is hidden behind heavenly Cosmic Energy ('which came down from heaven') and is manifest in this body called Jesus. Your fathers who ate the manna of temporary spiritual inspiration are still bound by delusion and its sequential rebirths and deaths, but any one of you who by deep meditation absorbs in his consciousness the Christ Consciousness (bread) will find his life united to eternal life."

In the metaphorical words in these Gospel verses, Jesus enunciates very profound truths. To recapitulate, Jesus refers to his flesh as bread, meaning the Christ Consciousness present in all vibratory creation, and to his blood as Cosmic Energy. Christ Consciousness and Cosmic Energy are inseparable, as Christ Consciousness is the reflection in creation of Cosmic Consciousness (which is beyond creation) manifested as Cosmic Energy or vibratory creation.

God the Father and Cosmic Consciousness are synonymous; Christ the Son and Christ Consciousness are one and the same. God the Father emanated from Him His son, Christ Intelligence, and Cosmic Energy, the Holy Ghost. As a son is conceived with the dual instrumentality of the father and the mother, so Christ Intelligence would not exist without the dual instrumentality of God the Father and Cosmic Energy (Holy Ghost or Cosmic Mother Nature). With God the Father remaining transcendent beyond creation, Christ Intelligence, the bread or flesh,

and the Cosmic Energy or blood, being inseparably together in creation, work to manifest the different forms extant in the universal spectacle.

Jesus Christ speaks of the bread and the flesh as one and the same thing. The flesh of the Son of man refers to the Christ Consciousness present in the body of Jesus as well as in the body of any individual. "Eateth my flesh" refers to the act of absorbing the Christ Consciousness into one's human consciousness. "Drinketh my blood" refers to the Cosmic Energy (blood) to be consciously united with the bodily life force—both of which are present in the human body and can be united by wisdom, divine realization—thus recharging the life in the body with the Holy Ghost Vibration of Cosmic Energy.

The sacramental rites in Christian churches, in which people partake of blessed wine as the blood of Jesus Christ and blessed bread as his flesh, are symbolical. Saintly souls have transcended the symbology and experienced in ecstasy the true receiving of Christ communion. Sincere devotees should learn the technique of interiorizing the consciousness in meditation for actual realization of the Christ Consciousness in their consciousness.*

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* "His flesh is the Word [*logos*], and his blood is the Holy Spirit," says the third-century gnostic Gospel of Philip (*The Nag Hammadi Library in English,* James M. Robinson, ed.; HarperSanFransisco, 1990). Such views were later replaced by the official church dogma of *transubstantiation*—the doctrine that the bread and wine used in the Eucharistic rites are mystically transformed into the physical body and blood of Jesus when blessed by an ordained priest during the liturgy of Holy Mass. The esoteric truth behind the church's dogmas and outer rituals, however, was not lost sight of by those of deeper insight, such as Saint Basil the Great, revered Doctor of the Church and bishop of Caesarea (329–379).

Karen Armstrong, in *A History of God,* describes the distinction between *dogma* and *kerygma* made by Basil, who taught that "both kinds of Christian teaching were essential to religion. *Kerygma* was the public teaching of the Church, based on the scriptures. *Dogma,* however, represented the deeper meaning of biblical truth, which could only be apprehended through religious experience and expressed in symbolic form. Besides the clear message of the Gospels, a secret or esoteric tradition had been handed down 'in a mystery' from the apostles; this had been a 'private and secret teaching, which our holy fathers have preserved in a silence that prevents anxiety and curiosity...so as to safeguard by this silence the sacred character of the mystery. The uninitiated are not permitted to behold these things: their meaning is not to be divulged by writing it down.' (Basil, *On the Holy Spirit,* 28.66.) Behind the liturgical symbols and lucid teachings of Jesus, there was a secret dogma which represented more developed understanding of the faith....Some religious insights had an inner resonance that could only be apprehended by each individual in his own time during what Plato had called *theoria,* contemplation....As Basil said, these elusive religious realities could only be suggested in the symbolic gestures of the liturgy."

See also Discourse 69, commentary on Jesus' words at the Last Supper. *(Publisher's Note)*

These things said he in the synagogue, as he taught in Capernaum. Many therefore of his disciples, when they had heard this, said, "This is an hard saying; who can hear it?"

When Jesus knew in himself that his disciples murmured at it, he said unto them, "Doth this offend you? What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before? It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life. But there are some of you that believe not." For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him (John 6:59–64).

In much of the text recorded in the Gospel of John, Jesus conveys challengingly recondite truths in such cryptic analogies and metaphors that modern-day theologians who interpret scripture for the masses find themselves not far removed from the disputatious learned men of Jesus' time! Sometimes Jesus confounded even his disciples; save for a few: "I am amazed that you who have followed me thus far still do not understand with intuitive receptivity the priceless wisdom I give to you; rather you are murmuring your misunderstanding among yourselves. You doubt my words and wonder at my sayings, but how much more astonished you would be if you were to see my body, the Son of man, go back to the Christ Consciousness whence it came?"

Jesus spoke cryptically, but rightly interpreted his words "are spirit, and they are life"

The consciousness of Jesus was tuned already with Christ Consciousness; and here Jesus alludes obliquely to his foreknowledge that his body, though visibly apart from Christ Consciousness, but being an emanation of that Consciousness, would consciously merge in it when the proper moment arrived.

Jesus tells his doubting disciples that if they wonder at his amazing sayings, they would have cause to be wholly astonished when they would behold his body after crucifixion return to life and be received by Heavenly Christ Consciousness. Jesus thereby promised his doubting disciples a demonstration of spirit and life contained in the truth of his words.

"When you concentrate on the Spirit, you understand that the Infinite Immortality can enliven your temporary life with eternal life. It is the flesh consciousness, the doubting material consciousness within

you, that will yield you no profit, no lasting happiness. It is spiritual understanding that can quickly lead you to eternal emancipation.

"The words of wisdom I speak unto you 'are spirit, and they are life,' they are charged with the Cosmic Consciousness of the Spirit and can give life to the spiritually dead, as are some of you. I know those among you who believe not that the universal panacea for human suffering lies hidden behind the words of my wisdom, if they are truly applied and fully realized."

When Jesus speaks of his words being "spirit and life," he implies the truth that every word has two aspects—the consciousness contained in it and the energy it produces. When a psychologically sick man is repentant and hears the word "peace" from a saintly individual, he becomes saturated with the consciousness of peace and with mental encouragement from an infusion of life-giving energy. Toward this end, Jesus made it clear to his disciples that if they were in tune with him they would feel the Christ-wisdom of Spirit behind his words and the life-giving energy contained in them.

The words of Jesus were not bookish dissertations, but emanated directly from the wisdom fountain of Cosmic Consciousness and the life-sustaining Christ Consciousness–guided Cosmic Energy. The wise and the spiritually inclined retire every day from the cacophonous busy-ness of thoughts and secrete themselves in the caves of silence deep in the clefts of contemplation. There the true devotee drinks from the fountain of Spirit and Life. Great masters who are tuned with Christ Consciousness give forth their teachings, like Christ, charged with the Cosmic Consciousness of Spirit and Cosmic Life.

Owing to his all-seeing wisdom, which could trace the law of cause and effect governing the actions of any individual, Jesus knew from the beginning who among his followers believed in him and who would be likely to forsake him:

> *And he said, "Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father" (John 6:65).*

66 From my omniscient consciousness I know those of you who have stored up good karma from your past good actions and have earned the divine grace of my Father by which you have been drawn to me and will be actuated to follow me faithfully. I know also those with the inclinations of bad karma who will leave me. No materially minded

man can reach and be in tune with the Christ Consciousness within me unless by his devotion he has appealed to the Supreme God, the Father."

Thus Jesus pointed out to his disciples that it was no small achievement for one to recognise and be able to follow the Christ Consciousness in him; it was a blessing earned by that individual who had gained previous good karma and the cooperation of the Cosmic Law, and the grace of God.

From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him. Then said Jesus unto the twelve, "Will ye also go away?"

*Then Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God."**

Jesus answered them, "Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?" He spake of Judas Iscariot the son of Simon: for he it was that should betray him, being one of the twelve (John 6:66–71).

Jesus was not in doubt about his chosen twelve disciples, but he respected their free will and reminded them that from the freedom of their hearts they must choose to remain with him.

Devotees ordain the happenings of their lives according to prenatal and postnatal seeds of action (karma); therefore, when Jesus said, "Have not I chosen you twelve (according to your karma) and one of you is a devil?" he did not speak of this as an inevitable arbitrary ordinance of God. He told this from his intimate knowledge of the inner life of each of his twelve disciples.

If Jesus were sure that all his twelve disciples were prisoners of destiny and that eleven were ordained to remain faithful to him, he would not have asked: "Will ye also go away?" Jesus knew that the disciples, though influenced by karma and cosmic law, still had free will to be with him or to forsake him. In fact, Jesus predicted his betrayal at the hands of Judas in order to warn him, that he might correct his karmic predisposition and refrain from doing the evil act.

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* Cf. Matthew 16:16–17 (see Discourse 45).

DISCOURSE 44

"The Signs of the Times"

Jesus' Works and Words in Testimony of His Special Dispensation

Hypocrisy of Observing External Rites While Ignoring the Spirit of Divine Principles

❖

Inner Purity, Not Outer Observances, Are the Gauge of One's Spirituality

❖

Why Jesus and Patanjali Warned Against Egoistic Likes and Dislikes

❖

Jesus' Special Dispensation Was to Minister to the Israelites; Thence It Was Destined to Spread to All

❖

Masters Use Various Means of Projecting the Life Force for Transmission of Divine Power

"You cannot read in my life the obvious signs of the times, the divine message given to man in this present age....and cannot recognise the divine sign already given to you, evidenced in the miraculous works of God performed through me."

Then came to Jesus scribes and Pharisees, which were of Jerusalem, saying, "Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread."

But he answered and said unto them, "Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition? For God commanded, saying, 'Honour thy father and mother': and, 'He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death.' But ye say, 'Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, "It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me"; and honour not his father or his mother, he shall be free.' Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition.

"Ye hypocrites, well did Isaiah prophesy of you, saying, 'This people draweth nigh unto Me with their mouth, and honoureth Me with their lips; but their heart is far from Me. But in vain they do worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.'"

And he called the multitude, and said unto them, "Hear, and understand: Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man."

Then came his disciples, and said unto him, "Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended, after they heard this saying?"

But he answered and said, "Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up. Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch."

Then answered Peter and said unto him, "Declare unto us this parable."

And Jesus said, "Are ye also yet without understanding? Do not ye yet understand, that whatsoever entereth in at the mouth goeth into the belly, and is cast out into the draught? But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man.

"For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: These are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man."

Then Jesus went thence, and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil." But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, "Send her away; for she crieth after us." But he answered and said, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel."

Then came she and worshipped him, saying, "Lord, help me."

But he answered and said, "It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs."

And she said, "Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table."

Then Jesus answered and said unto her, "O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt." And her daughter was made whole from that very hour.

—Matthew 15:1–28

And again, departing from the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, he came unto the sea of Galilee, through the midst of the coast of Decapolis. And they bring unto him one that was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech; and they beseech him to put his hand upon him.

And he took him aside from the multitude, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spit, and touched his tongue; and looking up to heaven, he sighed, and saith unto him, "Ephphatha," that is, "Be opened." And straightway his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plain.

And he charged them that they should tell no man: but the more he charged them, so much the more a great deal they

published it; and were beyond measure astonished, saying, "He hath done all things well: he maketh both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak."

—Mark 7:31–37

And Jesus departed from thence, and came nigh unto the sea of Galilee; and went up into a mountain, and sat down there. And great multitudes came unto him, having with them those that were lame, blind, dumb, maimed, and many others, and cast them down at Jesus' feet; and he healed them: Insomuch that the multitude wondered, when they saw the dumb to speak, the maimed to be whole, the lame to walk, and the blind to see: and they glorified the God of Israel.

Then Jesus called his disciples unto him, and said, "I have compassion on the multitude, because they continue with me now three days, and have nothing to eat: and I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint in the way."

And his disciples say unto him, "Whence should we have so much bread in the wilderness, as to fill so great a multitude?"

And Jesus saith unto them, "How many loaves have ye?" And they said, "Seven, and a few little fishes." And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the ground.

And he took the seven loaves and the fishes, and gave thanks, and brake them, and gave to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude. And they did all eat, and were filled: and they took up of the broken meat that was left seven baskets full. And they that did eat were four thousand men, beside women and children.

And he sent away the multitude, and took ship, and came into the coasts of Magdala. The Pharisees also with the Sadducees came, and tempting desired him that he would shew them a sign from heaven.

He answered and said unto them, "When it is evening, ye say, 'It will be fair weather: for the sky is red.' And in the morning, 'It will be foul weather today: for the sky is red and lowering.' O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky;

but can ye not discern the signs of the times? A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonah." And he left them, and departed.

And when his disciples were come to the other side, they had forgotten to take bread. Then Jesus said unto them, "Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees." And they reasoned among themselves, saying, "It is because we have taken no bread."

Which when Jesus perceived, he said unto them, "O ye of little faith, why reason ye among yourselves, because ye have brought no bread? Do ye not yet understand, neither remember the five loaves of the five thousand, and how many baskets ye took up? Neither the seven loaves of the four thousand, and how many baskets ye took up? How is it that ye do not understand that I spake it not to you concerning bread, that ye should beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees?"

Then understood they how that he bade them not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.

—Matthew 15:29—16:12

And he cometh to Bethsaida; and they bring a blind man unto him, and besought him to touch him. And he took the blind man by the hand, and led him out of the town; and when he spit on his eyes, and put his hands upon him, he asked him if he saw ought. And he looked up, and said, "I see men as trees, walking."

After that he put his hands again upon his eyes, and made him look up: and he was restored, and saw every man clearly. And he sent him away to his house, saying, "Neither go into the town, nor tell it to any in the town."

—Mark 8:22–26

DISCOURSE 44

"The Signs of the Times"

Jesus' Works and Words in Testimony of His Special Dispensation

Then came to Jesus scribes and Pharisees, which were of Jerusalem, saying, "Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread."

But he answered and said unto them, "Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition? For God commanded, saying, 'Honour thy father and mother': and, 'He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death.' But ye say, 'Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, "It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me"; and honour not his father or his mother, he shall be free.' Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition.

*"Ye hypocrites, well did Isaiah prophesy of you, saying, 'This people draweth nigh unto Me with their mouth, and honoureth Me with their lips; but their heart is far from Me. But in vain they do worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men'" (Matthew 15:1–9).**

* See Isaiah 29:13.

Parallel reference:

Then came together unto him the Pharisees, and certain of the scribes, which came from Jerusalem. And when they saw some of his disciples eat bread with defiled, that is to say, with unwashen, hands, they found fault. For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, except they wash their hands oft, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders. And when they come from the market, except they wash, they eat not. And many other things there be, which they have received to hold, as the washing of cups, and pots, brasen vessels, and of tables.

Then the Pharisees and scribes asked him, "Why walk not thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashen hands?"

He answered and said unto them, "Well hath Isaiah prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, 'This people honoureth Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. Howbeit in vain do they worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.' For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do."

And he said unto them, "Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition. For Moses said, 'Honour thy father and thy mother'; and, 'Whoso curseth father or mother, let him die the death': But ye say, 'If a man shall say to his father or mother, "It is Corban, that is to say, a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me"; he shall be free.' And ye suffer him no more to do ought for his father or his mother; making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye (Mark 7:1–13).

A common fault in the structure of religion, East and West, is the subordination of the spirit of divine principles by the expediency of man-made traditions of rules and rites. Traditionalists among the ancient Hebrews enlarged their code governing offerings to God, *corban,* to permit a man who promised to give his earthly goods to the service of the temple to thereby disavow his duty to support his parents, even though he might have made the promise of this gift to

God in a fit of anger against his parents or with otherwise wicked or selfish intentions. By merely declaring "*Corban*" regarding any of his material property, he could become free from any inconvenient obligation to his parents that was otherwise demanded by law, albeit they might be destitute and his withheld goods might never be utilized for the temple.* Resorting to this perversion of *corban* law made by man amounted to disobedience to the fifth commandment of God. Jesus by his criticism pointed out how the adoption of this degenerate ceremonial law had led to the violation of divine law:

Hypocrisy of observing external rites while ignoring the spirit of divine principles

"Tell me, why are you so conscientious in upholding your localized customs and yet flaunt God's commandments? Which is a greater sin—to ignore tradition and yet be faithful to God's commandments, or to denigrate God's commandments for your own useful purposes under the auspices of religious custom? You know full well that in order outwardly to appear holy you engage in your elaborate traditions and utterly reject the commandments of God when an adaptation is more self-serving.

"God vibrated His law and wish through prophet Moses' intuition: 'Honour your father and mother (with the devotion of your heart, as they are the divine instruments of your creation)'; and, 'he that curseth (he who uses vile language or thinks evil thoughts or commits abuses against) father or mother, let him die the death'†—that is, let him be remorseful with the agony as intense as death, and let him change himself and his consciousness even as one is changed in death."‡

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* "Jesus makes good his indictment against [the Pharisees'] tradition by giving an example of the mischievous way in which it set aside God's commandments. The law required the honouring of parents, and for any one to cast off his parents in their old age, thus subjecting them to beggary or starvation, was to do more than to speak evil of them. Such conduct was practically to curse them, and to incur the death penalty for so doing. But at this point the Pharisees interfered with their tradition, which taught that a son could say of that part of his estate by which his parents might be profited, It is a gift; that is, a gift to God, and by thus dedicating that part to God, he would free himself from his obligation to his parents."—J. W. McGarvey and Philip Pendleton, *The Fourfold Gospel* (Cincinnati: Standard Publishing, 1914). *(Publisher's Note)*

† These commandments given by God through Moses are recorded in Exodus 20:12 and 21:17, Leviticus 20:9, and Deuteronomy 5:16.

‡ Numerous studies of thousands of persons who have had "near-death experiences" have documented many positive changes that such brushes with death produce. One

Parents are the physical instruments of God who manifests on earth as the parental love that creates and protects the child. Therefore, an offspring who blasphemes against his parents blasphemes against God. Jesus reviled the Pharisees for having made a law that enabled a man to be free from his parental obligations, even in instances detrimental to them.

"O ye hypocrites, who are outwardly holy and inwardly wicked, how fittingly Isaiah prophesied about you after feeling these truths from his consciousness of the intelligent cosmic vibration of God's thoughts. Indeed he prophesied correctly about the nature of those who come to masters with sweet language and respectful utterances but with hearts sunk deep in the depths of insincerity. In vain do such men worship God, since they 'teach for doctrines the commandments of men' in preference to the commandments of God.

"You have laid aside at your convenience the laws of God for perfect living as revealed through the prophets and have clung to useless traditions of men, such as your elaborate rituals of hand-washing, for the nonobservance of which you scorn my disciples.* It is better that you should cleanse your inner selves by following God's purifying laws of righteousness as revealed through the seers rather than indulging so fervently in the external pseudopurification traditional customs that produce no lasting spiritual result."

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doctor who has done extensive research is Melvin Morse, M.D., who writes in *Parting Visions* (New York: HarperCollins, 1996): "I have never interviewed anyone who had a near-death experience who told me that they came back to make more money or to spend more time at their jobs away from their families....Instead they become convinced that they need to be more loving and kind. They react to their experience by living life to its fullest. They believe their lives have a purpose, even if that purpose is obscure to them. Invariably it involves concepts such as love of family or service to others. They seem to know that the love they create while living will be reflected and radiated back to them when they die." *(Publisher's Note)*

* From *Robertson's Word Pictures of the New Testament:* "Handwashing before meals is not a requirement of the Old Testament. It is, we know, a good thing for sanitary reasons, but the rabbis made it a mark of righteousness for others at any rate. This item was magnified at great length in the oral teaching. The washing of the hands called for minute regulations. It was commanded to wash the hands before meals, it was one's duty to do it after eating. The more rigorous did it between the courses. The hands must be immersed. Then the water itself must be 'clean' and the cups or pots used must be ceremonially 'clean.' Vessels were kept full of clean water ready for use (John 2:6–8). So it went on *ad infinitum*. Thus a real issue is raised between Jesus and the rabbis. It was far more than a point of etiquette or of hygienics. The rabbis held it to be a mortal sin."

Observance of man-made customs does not in itself bring one closer to God. One should observe normal hygiene, moral behaviour, and a reverent decorum in worship. But when setting aside time for God, elaborate preparations for worship by punctilious attention to prescribed rules and preliminary rituals may leave little or no time, or desire, for the quiet interiorization of deep meditation and divine communion. External observances are intended to engage the mind so that it is cleansed of worldly thoughts. But meditation itself is the true purifier of man's being that makes his consciousness receptive to divine contact.

"Outward ritual cannot destroy ignorance, because they are not mutually contradictory," wrote Swami Shankara. "Realized knowledge alone destroys ignorance."*

> *And he called the multitude, and said unto them, "Hear, and understand: Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man" (Matthew 15:10–11).*

Parallel reference:

> *And when he had called all the people unto him, he said unto them, "Hearken unto me every one of you, and understand: There is nothing from without a man, that entering into him can defile him: but the things which come out of him, those are they that defile the man. If any man have ears to hear, let him hear" (Mark 7:14–16).*

66 Lend me your attention, all of you, and by tuning your attention with the God-wisdom in me try to understand: Neither a person's omission of some outer man-made custom nor any vile condition in which he lives has inherent power to taint his inner being. It is the experiences and thoughts that are allowed to gain foothold in one's mind and feelings and saturate his consciousness with evil and then come forth as evil desires and actions that desecrate him. If any man has ears of understanding, let him hear and understand."

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* *Century of Verses.*

Jesus defends the action of his disciples of partaking of food without observing the ritual washing of hands as having no ill effect on the purity of their hearts and souls. The Pharisees and scribes who religiously practised outward customs without corresponding inner efforts at godliness gained nothing more than a hypocritical pretense of spirituality.

Inner purity, not outer observances, are the gauge of one's spirituality

Jesus sought to convey the understanding that no matter what one's outer environment, good or bad, "nothing from without a man" affects him as surely as the good or bad in his own heart. A strongly virtuous person in a bad environment usually remains good, and an entrenched wicked person in a good environment is likely to remain evil.

This does not mean that environment has no influence on man; its effect requires repeated remedial acts of will. Nevertheless, Jesus emphasizes that it is the inner environment of man that is of primary importance. My master Swami Sri Yukteswarji used to remind me: "Always be watchful of your company—the company of your friends and the company of your thoughts." A person who hosts evil thoughts is in evil company. But even if one is surrounded by ungodly associates yet holds the mind to good and positive thoughts, that evil influence is powerless to affect him.

Thus one's primary aim should be to establish virtue firmly within his heart and mind: To think and feel goodness is a powerful force that will attract a good environment and produce a natural, unpractised spiritual behaviour. By contrast, one whose emphasis is on adherence to prescribed outer customs, with no care taken to root out evil from his inner self, remains encircled by his company of evil thoughts and propensities, inevitably unable to thwart their insistence to express outwardly their deleterious nature—"the things which come out of him...that defile the man."

A person should be judged not by his actions alone, but according to the springs or motives of his actions. It is the evil motive of a man that actuates the iniquity coming out of him, nothing else. Of course, there are some evils committed by children through imitation, or by the mentally ill devoid of any power of reason, in which case they cannot be held responsible. But when a child or an adult does evil through his own innate motivation or desire, he is defiled thereby and that action portends an increasingly evil disposition.

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Then came his disciples, and said unto him, "Knoweth thou that the Pharisees were offended, after they heard this saying?"

*But he answered and said, "Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up. Let them alone: They be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch" (Matthew 15:12–14).**

Jesus answered indignation with indignation. The obtuseness of the Pharisees made them incapable of accepting the truth of his words. "Every 'plant' of imperfect human rule of conduct that man has expediently cultivated in the soil of tradition will in time be found to be a weed, useless to mankind; hence it shall be destroyed by the Cosmic Law. All God-made eternal rules of life that the prophets have declared through their cosmic consciousness as necessary to mankind will endure to the end. Leave the Pharisees and their acolytes in their much-loved attachment to their self-created darkness. If the spiritually blind lead people who are also blind with ignorance, together they must fall into the ditch of error with its consequential miseries."

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Then answered Peter and said unto him, "Declare unto us this parable."

And Jesus said, "Are ye also yet without understanding? Do not ye yet understand that whatsoever entereth in at the mouth goeth into the belly, and is cast out into the draught? But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man.

"For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: These are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man" (Matthew 15:15–20).

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* "Blind leaders of the blind": Jesus used the same phrase in Luke 6:39; see commentary in Discourse 33.

Parallel reference:

> *And when he was entered into the house from the people, his disciples asked him concerning the parable.*
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> *And he saith unto them, "Are ye so without understanding also? Do ye not perceive, that whatsoever thing from without entereth into the man, it cannot defile him; Because it entereth not into his heart, but into the belly, and goeth out into the draught, purging all meats?" And he said, "That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within, and defile the man" (Mark 7:17–23).*

66 O my true disciples, are you also without divine understanding? Do you not comprehend that just as ingested food affects only the body, not the inner being of man, so external outward customs and rites, observed or nonobserved, neither exalt nor spoil one's spirit? His character is revealed by what proceeds from the feelings he nurtures in his heart."

According to the great sage Patanjali, the feelings of the heart (*chitta*) are responsible for all our entanglements in earthly lives.* A

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* *Yoga Sutras* 1:2–3: "*Yoga* (scientific union with God) is the neutralization of the modifications of *chitta*. Then the beholder (the soul) is established in its own state"—i.e., the unconditioned freedom and immortal bliss inherent in the soul as a spark of God-essence.

As cited briefly in Discourse 26 ("blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God"), Jesus' teachings on the emotions parallel those of the more ancient science of yoga. A comprehensive yogic explication of how these energetic forces operate in man's consciousness to promote or impede awareness of the Divine is given in Paramahansa Yogananda's commentary on the first chapter of the Bhagavad Gita (especially verses 4–11). That such teachings were also known and practised as part of original Christianity is evident in the writings of a number of the early Church Fathers—leading some scholars to refer to them as a kind of "Christian yoga." Among the examples cited is Evagrius Ponticus, a fourth-century Desert Father whose writings were influential in the early mystical traditions of both Roman and eastern Orthodox Christianity, and later among the Sufi mystics of Islam. In *Lost Christianity* (New York: Tarcher/Penguin, 2003), Professor Jacob Needleman says of Evagrius's teaching: "The key term is the word *apatheia*, which translates into our word 'apathy' but which is as far from the meaning of our English word as diamonds are from broken glass....*Apatheia* means, literally, 'without emotions'—or, more precisely, freedom from emotions....Evagrius himself writes, 'Now this *apatheia* has a child called *agape* [love of God] who keeps the

man of little understanding blames God for the ills and evils into which he is born. But the scriptures of India explain wherein lies the real responsibility. Souls are sent on earth as perfect images of God to be entertained there, to witness and experience the wonders of creation with the attitude of a divine being. But when man subverts his transcendent soul-nature with egoistic involvement of the feelings of his heart in likes and dislikes—indiscriminate attractions and repulsions—about material things and experiences, those distortions of consciousness become insidious entanglements that make him a part of, rather than a being apart from, delusion. Accruing in his consciousness lifetime after lifetime, the desires, attachments, and tendencies of the likes and dislikes in his feelings compel him to reincarnate in a physical body that has been customized by his own design. If these proclivities are evil, they will surely proceed from the feelings of the heart into actions that defile man's innate nobility.

Why Jesus and Patanjali warned against egoistic likes and dislikes

That is why Jesus emphasized the difference between external and internal methods of purifying the heart: "Out of the evil karmic

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door to deep knowledge of the created universe. Finally, to this knowledge succeed *theology* [experiential knowledge of God] and the supreme beatitude.'"

Likewise, in *Yoga Sutras* 1:21 Patanjali says that the goal of yoga is nearest—that is, is reached most quickly by—those who possess *tivra-samvega* (extreme dispassion; not a negative state but a transmutation of longing for the world into intense ardour for God).

Professor Needleman continues: "The most influential of Evagrius' practical writings may be taken as general guidelines for the arduous inner struggle to break free from the sufferings and illusions brought to man by the emotions. Emotions and the thoughts that support them are often given the name 'demons.' This term, which sounds so naive to the modern mind, has a meaning that is anything but naive. Man is a microcosmic being; he lives and moves within a field of forces and influences spanning the entire ontological range of forces in the universe. These forces have a direction—a vertical direction toward or away from unity with God. And the transactions of these forces take place within the mind and heart, within the 'soul,' as well as in the external universe....

"The *Praktikos* of Evagrius begins with the listing of eight kinds of 'evil' or 'passionate' thoughts: gluttony, impurity, avarice, sadness, anger, *acedia* ['the desire to give up'], vainglory, and pride. By calling them 'thoughts,' Evagrius is referring to an exceedingly important element in the early-Christian teaching about the emotions....'It is not in our power,' Evagrius writes, 'to determine whether we are disturbed by these thoughts, but it is up to us to decide if they are to linger within us or not and whether or not they are able to stir up our passions.'

"In short, thoughts, impulses, associations appear within the psyche, but as such *they are not yet emotions.* It is only when these 'thoughts' are given something by ourselves, some energy, some specific psychic force, that they take on the nature of emotion—passion—and assume their overwhelming power in our inner and outer lives." *(Publisher's Note)*

tendencies stored up in the heart of men (*chitta* or feeling), all evil thoughts and actions spring. Adulterous lusts and adulterous actions, sexual temptations and fornications, murderous inclinations and murderous actions, thievish thoughts and thieving actions, covetous thoughts and covetous actions, penchant for lying about others and the act of bearing false witness, desires to deceive and deceitful actions, lascivious thoughts and lascivious actions, power to inflict harm by an evil eye and use of that power, impulses to curse and acts of cursing, thoughts of blasphemy and blasphemous actions, feelings of pride and boastful actions, and all foolishness, are the offspring of the wicked tendencies stored up in the heart of man, through his ignorant actions of this life and past existences. All these evil tendencies, if not curtailed and spiritually sublimated, defile man with multiform miseries."

Evil thoughts are a smoke screen of ignorance that hides from the conscious mind the purity and everlasting joy of the soul. One who looks at life through this pollution of feeling is unable to perceive the subtle beauty of the image of God hidden within him. Living in this darkness, man makes himself wholly vulnerable to all manner of delusive afflictions—physical, mental, and spiritual.

One who ennobles and beautifies his inner feeling with bright and cheerful thoughts and spiritual aspirations, and most important, who performs daily the highest purificatory rite of cleansing the consciousness in divine wisdom through meditation, finds that through the transparency of his inner luminous living all the exultant excellence of his God-reflecting soul pours forth and shines into his conscious mind.

*Then Jesus went thence, and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil." But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, "Send her away; for she crieth after us." But he answered and said, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matthew 15:21–24).**

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* Cf. parallel reference in Mark 7:24–26.

"From time to time, the Heavenly Father sends an emissary to minister to a particular community, race, or nation of people in whom he can rekindle the flame of truth and open forgotten portals of salvation. Although my teachings are universal and will be applicable and useful to all lives on earth at all times,* still I am not sent for all at present, as I have been especially ordained by the Heavenly Father to act as the spiritual shepherd to the bewildered 'sheep' or spiritual seekers belonging to the house of Israel. The Israelites once were deeply virtuous, as seen in their prophets; the accumulated power of their good karma sent out a silent call to the Heavenly Father. In response to that call He has sent me in this cycle as the promised saviour to the Israelites."

Jesus' special dispensation was to minister to the Israelites; thence it was destined to spread to all

Jesus' mission was one of world significance. But it is not surprising that since he had only the short span of three years to establish the influence of his life and teachings, he concentrated the whole of his power in one relatively limited locale and people, "I am sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." This is where the stage had been set for the beginning of his world ministry.

The coming of one such as he had been prophesied in the Hebrew scriptures—a Messiah, a man of Nazareth born in Bethlehem. Further, he was of the lineage of the Old Testament Hebraic prophets in his life as Elisha, disciple of Elijah. Perhaps most significantly, of the civilisations of the world in the time of Jesus, the doctrines of the Hebrew nation—with the exception of India—constituted the only monotheistic religious tradition espousing God as One Supreme Spirit.† The territories bordering the land of Jesus' birth, as also the Roman Empire that conquered and ruled in Israel, were polytheistic, pagan worshippers of

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* Cf. Discourse 32, commentary on prophecy of Isaiah quoted in Matthew 12:21: "And in his name shall the Gentiles trust."

† The spiritual traditions of India, while always allowing for a near-infinite variety of personifications of the Supreme Deity to accommodate the diversity of human temperament, have upheld a pure monotheism since the time of her earliest scriptures. "Truth is One; the wise call it by many names," declares the Rig Veda (1.164.46). "The Rig Veda (x.82.3) unambiguously declares monotheism," writes Dr. N. C. Panda in *The Vibrating Universe* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1995), "in the following verse: 'He is our father, generator, and disposer. He knows all the worlds. He is one alone. All the names of the gods refer to Him only.'"

"In Hinduism and Buddhism people were encouraged to go beyond the gods," writes Karen Armstrong in *A History of God*. "[But] the new religion of the One God

many gods as powers from which favours could be propitiated. The Roman and Greek gods were often anthropomorphic, immortals made in man's image, from which concept even the Roman Caesars and Egyptian Pharaohs were elevated to the hierarchy of gods.

Had Jesus taught and performed his miracles extensively among the pagans, the intermixing of perspectives would surely have handed down to succeeding generations a different view of his teachings. For the message God had given him to give to the world, he found a perfect harmony in the atmosphere of the wisdom of the Hebrew prophets, India's Advaita-Yoga science of God-communion and ultimate union with Spirit, and the Buddhist emphasis on the law of karma and divine love and compassion for all beings. Certainly he had enough opposition to balk in the priestly castes of Israel without also confrontations with pagan priestly hierarchy.

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was not coming as easily to the Israelites as Buddhism or Hinduism to the people of the subcontinent."

"The ancient Israelites were not originally or always strict monotheists," observes Jonathan Kirsch, author of several acclaimed works on Jewish history, in *The Woman Who Laughed at God: The Untold History of the Jewish People* (New York: Viking, 2001). "Only when we reach the Book of Kings and the writings of the Prophets"—i.e., the time of Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah, etc.—"do the biblical authors enforce the laws against idolatry wholeheartedly and embrace monotheism as the official theology of ancient Israel in plain language."

Experts generally agree, writes Kirsch, that the five books of the Torah, traditionally attributed to Moses (circa 1250 B.C.), were actually the work of multiple authors and revisionists over a period of perhaps a thousand years. Some scholars, including Karen Armstrong, believe that the evidence of history shows that the pure monotheism passed down to later Judaism truly crystalized during the Jewish exile in Babylon from 597 to 538 B.C., and that the older books of the Hebrew Bible were revised accordingly. Other historians point out that it was through Babylon that India's metaphysics and mysticism influenced Jewish, Greek, and Gnostic philosophy. It was during and after the Babylonian exile that some of Judaism's greatest prophets lived and taught—Ezekiel, Jeremiah, and others.

In his *Autobiography of a Yogi,* Paramahansa Yogananda writes: "To surmount *maya* was the task assigned to the human race by the millennial prophets. To rise above the duality of creation and perceive the unity of the Creator was conceived of as man's highest goal....To remove the veil of *maya* is to uncover the secret of creation. He who thus denudes the universe is the only true monotheist. All others are worshipping heathen images. So long as man remains subject to the dualistic illusions of Nature, the Janus-faced *Maya* is his goddess; he cannot know the one true God....

"*Maya* or *avidya* can never be destroyed through intellectual conviction or analysis, but solely through attaining the interior state of *nirbikalpa samadhi*. The Old Testament prophets, and seers of all lands and ages, spoke from that state of consciousness." *(Publisher's Note)*

Jesus knew that the concentrated power of his teaching would go forth in its own time to the farthest reaches of human hearts through the instrumentality of his spiritually blessed and well-indoctrinated apostles and their succession of sincere followers.

This is the pattern of all God's divine messengers. They are born in a particular place at a particular time and establish their influence in the locale decreed by God—be it communal or universal. Each dispensation bears its own stamp of the will of God.

Among the divine emissaries who have blessed and enlightened mankind may be noted the following, whose special dispensations were relative to their predecessors:

Special dispensations sent by God through divine emissaries down the ages

Bhagavan Krishna appeared in India many centuries before Jesus to redeem the virtuous Pandava people of India who were oppressed by the wicked Kurus. He was a *purnavatara*, full incarnation of Divinity, able to manifest all the qualities of God in his life.* Through the sage Vyasa he gave to India and to the world one of the greatest scriptures, the Bhagavad Gita, the yoga science of the soul and its path to liberation in Spirit.

Later, Gautama Buddha incarnated in India when the message of mercy was sorely needed. It has been said of him that he restored the heart to the religion of India, which had degraded into priestly practices of rituals and mechanical ceremonies. He emphasized the law of righteous action as the way to escape the ever-rotating karmic wheel of birth and death, as also the necessity of developing compassion for all creatures by feeling the presence of Divinity in all life. Through Buddha's influence many animal sacrificial rites were stopped.

Five centuries after Buddha, Jesus Christ appeared to bring the message of faith and devotion for attaining the kingdom of heaven. By his performance of miraculous healings of the bodies, minds, and souls of so many, he demonstrated the ever-present divine love and forgiveness of God to be had by all who make themselves receptive.

In the seventh century A.D., Swami Shankara (Adi Shankaracharya) incarnated to bring the teaching of the Supreme Spirit as ever-existing, ever-conscious, ever-new Bliss. This positive conception of God was much needed for the overintellectualized classes of India, who through

* See Discourse 16, discussion of partial and full divine incarnations (*khanda avatars* and *purna avatars*).

a corruption of Buddha's teaching had developed a doctrine of annihilation as the ultimate end of life. This fallacy arose from a misinterpretation of the idea of *nirvana,* the cessation of ego consciousness and its consequent reincarnations. The real teaching of Buddha, in accord with all great prophets of India, was that egoistic desires cause rebirth, and that any soul who overcomes material desires finds liberation—not extinction! Swami Shankara reasserted the eternal truth that a soul who overcomes material desire becomes united to the positive state of ever-existing, ever-conscious, ever-new Bliss. He pointed out that God, Spirit, is that ever-new Bliss, and as such is a universal necessity and the highest goal of life, to be sought through discrimination and meditation on the inner Self, the secret shrine of the blissful Infinite Spirit in man.

In the twelfth century, Sri Chaitanya came in India to ignite in men's hearts an ardent love for God. His path of *bhakti* or all-surrendering devotion restored the primacy of actually experiencing a personal relationship with God, a concept demeaned by the abstrusely philosophizing pundits and scholars who influenced the practice of religion at that time.

In the modern era, Mahavatar Babaji gave to the world through Lahiri Mahasaya the *Kriya Yoga* science with its techniques of concentration and meditation by which God-contact can be realized. Lahiri Mahasaya emphasized that religionists should rise above their superficial differences, concentrate on the universal principles of morality, and learn the science and art of interiorizing the mind and tuning it with the Infinite. His doctrine of *Kriya Yoga* is unique in the fact that, apart from advice on moral culture and self-discipline, it gives definite techniques of meditation for step-by-step ascension to Self-realization. Through attainment of universally experienced successive states of superconsciousness, Christ Consciousness, and Cosmic Consciousness, the soul ultimately merges in the Supreme Being. The consciousness of the followers of all religions, by whatever means, must pass through these states to attain God-union. Lahiri Mahasaya's teaching is especially suited to the modern age because it does not ask anyone to believe dogmatically, but rather by practice of the proven techniques of *Kriya Yoga* to discover by personal realization the answer to the eternal question, "What is truth?"—about oneself and God.

The above masters or saviours had progressed through the different degrees of manifestation of God's qualities. It is when masters are

fully or almost fully spiritually developed that they come on earth through the will of God to carry out His special dispensations. God Himself, as God, never comes down to dwell on earth in a human body. By definition the Illimitable Infinite cannot be confined to any one form with its inherent limitations.

An essential equality exists among all masters who have fully regained God-consciousness within themselves; but they are sometimes differentiated according to their qualitative and quantitative works on earth. Masters are distinguished qualitatively according to the number of souls they have helped to elevate to Christhood, and quantitatively according to the number of people they have inspired during their stay on earth. Jesus created eleven masters from his twelve disciples. Lahiri Mahasaya similarly created many masters; one of them was my God-realized guru Sri Yukteswarji.

Thus we see that Jesus said, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel" in order to declare the incipient unfoldment of God's grand design for Jesus' special dispensation on earth, and not because of any narrow partiality to the Israelites. John the Baptist's declaration, "But that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore I am come baptizing with water" (John 1:31) confirmed that Jesus' divine consciousness was to be revealed first to the Israelites. His spiritual influence as a world saviour was both qualitative and quantitative: to work first for the awakening of those who lived in the land of his birth at that time—especially in a qualitative way for liberating the advanced souls who were his close disciples; and second, by his teachings, example, and omnipresent blessings to inspire on the path to God-realization all people for all time.

Then came she and worshipped him, saying, "Lord, help me."

But he answered and said, "It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs."

And she said, "Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table."

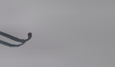
Then Jesus answered and said unto her, "O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt." And her daughter was made whole from that very hour (Matthew 15:25–28).

Parallel reference:

> *But Jesus said unto her, "Let the children first be filled: for it is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it unto the dogs."*
>
> *And she answered and said unto him, "Yes, Lord: yet the dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs."*
>
> *And he said unto her, "For this saying go thy way; the devil is gone out of thy daughter." And when she was come to her house, she found the devil gone out, and her daughter laid upon the bed (Mark 7:27–30).*

66 Let the divinely ordained children, the Israelites, be first spiritually served by me, according to the will of God. During the short period I am on earth it is not fitting for me to offer the bread of divine consciousness to any of the more materially minded peoples whose pagan beliefs seek only the miracles of physical healing, not the spiritual transformation of consciousness."

Jesus realized his lifetime was too short to give of his divine consciousness to broader arenas of an unready world. He must first serve those whose spiritual background made them more receptive, and whose good karma had attracted the grace of God. Nevertheless, when the woman—who was "a Greek, a Syrophoenician by nation"* —displayed the sincerity of her eagerness, he did not refuse to heal her daughter. To her he said: "O woman, the pulling power of your will and conviction draws the all-healing cosmic energy from me; so let your will be fulfilled. Go your way; you will find that the cosmic energy, roused by your faith and my will, has dislodged the evil spirit from the life of your daughter."



> *And again, departing from the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, he came unto the sea of Galilee, through the midst of the coast of Decapolis. And they bring unto him one that was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech; and they beseech him to put his hand upon him.*

* Mark 7:26.

And he took him aside from the multitude, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spit, and touched his tongue; and looking up to heaven, he sighed, and saith unto him, "Ephphatha," that is, "Be opened." And straightway his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plain.

And he charged them that they should tell no man: but the more he charged them, so much the more a great deal they published it; and were beyond measure astonished, saying, "He hath done all things well: he maketh both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak" (Mark 7:31–37).

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And Jesus departed from thence, and came nigh unto the sea of Galilee; and went up into a mountain, and sat down there. And great multitudes came unto him, having with them those that were lame, blind, dumb, maimed, and many others, and cast them down at Jesus' feet; and he healed them: Insomuch that the multitude wondered, when they saw the dumb to speak, the maimed to be whole, the lame to walk, and the blind to see: and they glorified the God of Israel (Matthew 15:29–31).

"By the divinely charged power flowing as nectarous energy into my mouth from the astral reservoir of cosmic life force within me, infusing my whole body and empowering the vibration of my words, and by my sigh of the almighty breath of life, I absorb within me your evil karma and its resultant effects of your sorrow and sickness. I have commanded the all-healing heavenly energy to fall upon you and your brain and send the healing vibrations to loosen up the defective auditory and speech nerves. Be healed!"

Masters use various means of projecting the life force for transmission of divine power

Masters are able to control all physical, astral, and spiritual processes of the body. They know various methods for generating and concentrating divine power in their bodies to surcharge themselves or to be used as projected vibrations to heal others or to manifest some supernatural phenomenon. Transmuting the atoms of breath into all-powerful lifetronic energy is one such means—"looking up to heaven (into the spiritual eye), he sighed." Another technique known to advanced yogis causes a divine

nectar of tremendous power to be secreted into the throat. It enables accomplished yogis to remain in motionless ecstatic states for prolonged periods of time, with their bodies spiritually electrified with vibrant power. This nectarous energy is also one means by which they can sustain their bodies with little or no food, as has been demonstrated by great saints and yogis—"Man shall not live by bread alone...." [See Discourse 8.] In a master of the supreme stature of Jesus, this powerful secretion can be summoned by will power to divinely charge any process of the body, as also his spittle, to be a medium of healing. Other examples of this are recorded in Mark 8:22–26 [page 871] and John 9:6–7 [Discourse 52]. It is likely that Jesus used this concentrated nectar of astral energy in these unusual healings; as he himself had noted, otherwise, it was an abominable offense worthy of damnation for one even to say to another: "*Raca*—'I spit on you.'" [See Discourse 27.] This same principle employed by Jesus of transmission of divine power concentrated in the mouth (as well as in the hands, feet, and eyes) of a master, is the basis of the tradition in India that any remnant of food left uneaten by a divine personage or food given to someone by him from the plate from which he has eaten is considered as *prasad,* imbued with blessings.

Then Jesus called his disciples unto him, and said, "I have compassion on the multitude, because they continue with me now three days, and have nothing to eat: and I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint in the way."

And his disciples say unto him, "Whence should we have so much bread in the wilderness, as to fill so great a multitude?"

And Jesus saith unto them, "How many loaves have ye?" And they said, "Seven, and a few little fishes." And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the ground.

*And he took the seven loaves and the fishes, and gave thanks, and brake them, and gave to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude. And they did all eat, and were filled: and they took up of the broken meat that was left seven baskets full. And they that did eat were four thousand men, beside women and children.**

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* Cf. parallel reference in Mark 8:1–9. Jesus' miracle of materialising bread and fish is commented on in Discourse 42.

And he sent away the multitude, and took ship, and came into the coast of Magdala. The Pharisees also with the Sadducees came, and tempting desired him that he would shew them a sign from heaven.

*He answered and said unto them, "When it is evening, ye say, 'It will be fair weather: for the sky is red.' And in the morning, 'It will be foul weather today: for the sky is red and lowering.' O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times? A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given it, but the sign of the prophet Jonah." And he left them, and departed (Matthew 15:32 — 16:4).**

"O you hypocrites, you can read on the face of the sky whether the weather will be evil or good, yet you cannot read in my life the obvious signs of the times, the divine message given to man in this present age. As ignorant people cannot discern the weather in the countenance of the sky, so this wicked generation has lost its spiritual vision and cannot recognise the divine sign already given to you, evidenced in the miraculous works of God performed through me."

Jesus signified that the miracles worked through him by God were ample sign and testimony of God's approval and commission of him. By his reference to Jonah, he also prophesied about his own coming trial and resurrection three days after death, which would prove his immortality and divine heritage for all time and all peoples.†

Jesus, being human as well as divine, felt deep sorrow, envisioning the misery that his wicked contemporaries would have to go through because of their bad karma and refusal to be spiritually cleansed by him.

And when his disciples were come to the other side, they had forgotten to take bread. Then Jesus said unto them, "Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees." And they reasoned among themselves, saying, "It is because we have taken no bread."

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* Cf. parallel reference in Mark 8:10–13.

† See Discourse 36, commentary on Matthew 12:38–40.

Which when Jesus perceived, he said unto them, "O ye of little faith, why reason ye among yourselves, because ye have brought no bread? Do ye not yet understand, neither remember the five loaves of the five thousand, and how many baskets ye took up? Neither the seven loaves of the four thousand, and how many baskets ye took up? How is it that ye do not understand that I spake it not to you concerning bread, that ye should beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees?"

*Then understood they how that he bade them not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees (Matthew 16:5–12).**

66 O beloved disciples, why do you, by the confusion of your rationalizing mental restlessness, confound your faith, your Self-realization born of meditation, so that you fail to understand through your all-seeing intuition what I say? Why do you not feel my words in your intuition and then understand it in your reason?

"Why have you so little divine conviction that you worry about material bread when you have already witnessed how the Divine in me fed multitudes with a few loaves? I would not be warning you about the leaven of the bread of the Pharisees and Sadducees. It is of their false doctrines that you must beware, which are not the pure bread of life you find in my teachings. Their specious religious dogmas and customs sicken with ignorance one's spiritual life."

And he cometh to Bethsaida; and they bring a blind man unto him, and besought him to touch him. And he took the blind man by the hand, and led him out of the town; and when he spit on his eyes, and put his hands upon him, he asked him if he saw ought. And he looked up, and said, "I see men as trees, walking."

After that he put his hands again upon his eyes, and made him look up: and he was restored, and saw every man clearly. And he sent him away to his house, saying, "Neither go into the town, nor tell it to any in the town" (Mark 8:22–26).

* Cf. parallel reference in Mark 8:14–21.

Jesus would not heal the man inside the town of Bethsaida, nor permit the man to testify to the healing in that town, because Bethsaida had rejected Jesus, and he had said of it: "Woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you."*

Jesus felt every particle in his body, including his sputum, charged with the high voltage of all-healing cosmic energy. He took the divinely charged secretion from his mouth and applied it to the eyes of the blind man and electrified them with the positive-negative current flowing from his hands. Then Jesus asked him if he saw clearly. The man replied, "I see men as walking trees." Then Jesus gave a second healing to the man's eyes and told him to look up at the point between the two eyebrows where the spiritual eye is located. When the blind man lifted his eyes there he made a contact with cosmic energy, which flowed from the single divine eye into his two eyes healing them completely so that he "saw every man clearly."

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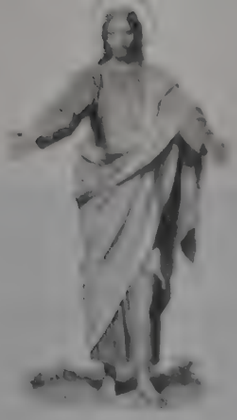
* Matthew 11:21 (see commentary in Discourse 34).



DISCOURSE 45

Peter's Inspired Recognition of the Christ, and Jesus' Transfiguration

The Inner Meaning of Jesus' Words to Peter About Leading His Church

❖

Jesus' Message Has Survived Not Through Institutional Power, but Through God-Knowing Devotees

❖

Spiritual Discipline for Attaining Christ Consciousness

❖

What Jesus Meant by Predicting "the Son of Man Coming in His Kingdom"

❖

The Transfiguration of Jesus' Body Into the Glory of God's Light

❖

Spiritual Significance of the Presence of Elijah and Moses With Jesus

"The commission Jesus gave to Peter and the other Apostles, and all who would carry on his mission, was to attain God-contact themselves, and from that inner divine attunement to preach through the example of their lives."

When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, "Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?"

And they said, "Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elijah; and others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets."

He saith unto them, "But whom say ye that I am?"

And Simon Peter answered and said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

And Jesus answered and said unto him, "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

Then charged he his disciples that they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ.

From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day.

Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, "Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee."

But he turned, and said unto Peter, "Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men."

Then said Jesus unto his disciples, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

"For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man accord-

ing to his works. Verily I say unto you, there be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom."

And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart, and was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light. And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elijah talking with him.

Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah."

While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him."

And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their face, and were sore afraid.

And Jesus came and touched them, and said, "Arise, and be not afraid."

And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only.

And as they came down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, saying, "Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen again from the dead."

And his disciples asked him, saying, "Why then say the scribes that Elijah must first come?"

And Jesus answered and said unto them, "Elijah truly shall first come, and restore all things. But I say unto you, that Elijah is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them."

Then the disciples understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist.

—Matthew 16:13—17:13

DISCOURSE 45

Peter's Inspired Recognition of the Christ, and Jesus' Transfiguration

When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, "Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?"

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*Then charged he his disciples that they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ (Matthew 16:13–20).**

* Cf. parallel references in Mark 8:27–30 and Luke 9:18–21.

Jesus' question and his disciples' reply indicate the common knowledge and acceptance in Jesus' time of the law of reincarnation, evidenced also in several other passages of the Gospels.*

Jesus' words to his disciples were a sincere enquiry into their understanding and attunement: "I care not what the populace in general thinks of me, but tell me what you realize." Simon Peter answered: "In thee is the manifestation of Christ Consciousness, the only begotten Son, the only reflection in all vibratory creation of God the Father beyond creation."

Jesus responded: "You are blessed by your own good karma and the grace of the Father that through your intuition He has revealed unto you the truth about me. No one whose consciousness is limited by identification with the body ('flesh and blood') can realize the Spirit hidden within the physical form; such a one could never perceive the Christ Consciousness within me. It was not through any bodily instrument of knowledge that you have received this understanding; rather, through your exalted consciousness, the Father, omnipresent in His heavenly Cosmic Consciousness, has made known to you the manifestation of His presence as Christ Consciousness within me."

The inner meaning of Jesus' words to Peter about leading his church

From the time of their first encounter in this incarnation [see Discourse 9], Jesus had christened Simon the son of Jona with the name by which he would be known to the ages: Peter, the rock.† Pleased with Simon Barjona's intuitive perception of the Christ in him, Jesus commended him and spiritually anointed him to become the preeminent leader of the early faithful congregation of devotees: "And I say also unto you, that thou art a rock—your consciousness is one with the Father's Cosmic Consciousness, That which is the sole solid foundation of all that exists. You have intuitively perceived the eternal verity: 'Thou art That' ('*Tat tvam asi,*' the declaration of Swami Shankara and the hoary Vedas of the soul's inseparable oneness with Spirit). On the firm rock of your wisdom united to the Cosmic Father, I will build a temple of my inner teachings, a church of God-consciousness in which, through your ministry, a congregation of seeking souls will find God on the altar of the divine communion of

* See page 889 of this Discourse, and Discourses 2, 6, 13, and 52.

† In Aramaic, *Cephas;* in Greek, *Petros:* a rock.

deep meditation.* The wide-open gates of delusion, decorated with glittering promises of fulfilment in sense pleasures, lead unsuspecting souls into a spiritually dark hell of mortal misery. But they will not be able to lure sincere devotees who have once experienced the divine joy of sanctuary in Christ Consciousness within the inner church of my teachings, whose lived truths you have realized and will make manifest for the inspiration and guidance of others.

"Through your perception of the Christ Consciousness within yourself, even as you recognised the Christ in me, you will find that the methods of God-contact I have given you are the keys to the kingdom of heaven—the way to pass through Christ Consciousness into Cosmic Consciousness, that heavenly infinitude where God the Father reigns as the only King. I leave with you these keys, these techniques of divine union, for you to give to any devotee who is in tune with your consciousness, ready and deserving of entering the kingdom of Cosmic Consciousness.

"Whatever laws of superconscious living you shall give to discipline, 'bind,' God-seeking souls on earth will be those sanctioned by the Cosmic Consciousness, the Heavenly Thou-Art-That consciousness, which you have realized within yourself. And whatever laws governing attainment of superconscious freedom you will instil in material-minded earthbound souls, laws that will liberate, 'loose,' souls, will likewise be the ones that governed the souls who have become emancipated in Cosmic Consciousness."

Jesus' proclamation that "upon this rock I will build my church" had primarily an inner meaning—for Peter as an individual as well as for successive generations who would perpetuate Jesus' teachings. His singling out of Peter was in the tradition of *guru-parampara,* appointment of a master's spiritual successor.† The commission Jesus gave to

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* Note about Matthew 16:18, *...I will build my church:*

"Here and Matthew 18:17 are the only two verses in which the word *congregation* (frequently translated 'church') appear in the Gospels. It is a term of Greek-speaking Christianity. In secular Greek it refers to a popular assembly. Early Greek-speaking Christians borrowed the term from their Bible, the Septuagint, where it frequently is used to translate the Hebrew term for the community of God (e.g., Deuteronomy 23:2)."—Robert J. Miller, ed., *The Complete Gospels: Annotated Scholars Version* (HarperSanFrancisco, 1994). *(Publisher's Note)*

† See discussion of disciple-succession (*guru-parampara*) in Discourse 41, commentary on Matthew 10:40: "He that receiveth you receiveth me, and he that receiveth me receiveth Him that sent me."

Peter and the other Apostles, and all who would carry on his mission, was to attain God-contact themselves, and from that inner divine attunement to preach through the example of their lives and the lived truths of their verbal teachings.

The heart of the great dispensation of Jesus has survived not necessarily in any temporal power of an outer institution, but in those great devotees and saints whose protracted devotions and meditations established within them temples of Christ Consciousness and God-communion.

Jesus' message has survived not through institutional power, but through God-knowing devotees

The fourth-century Saint Anthony, for example, prevented a disintegrating schism among Jesus' followers by the sheer power of divine realization in his simple words: "I have seen him!" In medieval times the God-knowing Saint Francis of Assisi, who beheld in his nightly prayers his master Jesus in living form, brought a renaissance of Christ spirit to Christianity after being commanded in a divine vision to rebuild the crumbling edifice of the church when it had lost the essence of Jesus' teachings. Centuries later, when the church was in dire need of another life-giving reform, the ecstatic Saint Teresa of Avila taught the true worship of Christ in the church of divine communion: the "interior castle" entered by taking the mind and life force within in deep meditation.

Christ has lived also in the realization of those of other religious persuasions; Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa of India undertook the *sadhana* of different religions to prove they all lead to the same realization; he had ecstatic communion with Jesus, whom he saw as "the Christ, who shed His heart's blood for the redemption of the world, who suffered a sea of anguish for love of men....the Master Yogi, who is in eternal union with God....Love Incarnate."* Mahavatar Babaji commissioned my guru Swami Sri Yukteswar to write from his

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* Sri Ramakrishna's experience with Jesus was recorded in *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* by Mahendra Nath Gupta: "Some time in November 1874, Sri Ramakrishna was seized with an irresistible desire to learn the truth of the Christian religion. He began to listen to readings from the Bible....Sri Ramakrishna became fascinated by the life and teachings of Jesus. One day he was seated in the parlour of Jadu Mallick's garden house at Dakshineswar, when his eyes became fixed on a painting of the Madonna and Child. Intently watching it, he became gradually overwhelmed with divine emotion. The figures in the picture took on life, and the rays of light emanating from them entered his soul....he cried out, 'O Mother! What are You doing to me?' And, breaking through the barriers of creed and religion, he entered a new realm of ecstasy. Christ possessed his soul. For three days he did not set foot in the Kali temple. On the fourth

enlightened consciousness a treatise (*The Holy Science*) on "the underlying harmony between Christian and Hindu scriptures." "Quoting the words of the blessed Lord Jesus," my Guru said, "I showed that his teachings are in essence one with the revelations of the Vedas."

It is such saints and masters who have actually communed with God —those known to history as well as countless anonymous true souls devoted to Christ, hidden in monasteries and convents in wholehearted consecration—who have verily been the "rock" on which Jesus' inner church of Christ communion has endured these two thousand years.

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From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day.

Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, "Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee."

*But he turned, and said unto Peter, "Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men" (Matthew 16:21–23).**

"O satanic delusion, speaking through the sympathy of Peter, drop away from my consciousness and remain behind, forsaken and unheeded as I march resolutely toward my Father's kingdom of Cosmic Consciousness. As I shall exchange temporary bodily

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day, in the afternoon, as he was walking in the Panchavati, he saw coming toward him a person with beautiful large eyes, serene countenance, and fair skin. As the two faced each other, a voice rang out in the depths of Sri Ramakrishna's soul: 'Behold the Christ, who shed His heart's blood for the redemption of the world, who suffered a sea of anguish for love of men. It is He, the Master Yogi, who is in eternal union with God. It is Jesus, Love Incarnate.' The Son of Man embraced the Son of the Divine Mother and merged in him. Sri Ramakrishna realized his identity with Christ, as he had already realized his identity with Kali, Rama, Hanuman, Radha, Krishna, Brahman, and Mohammed. The Master went into samadhi and communed with the Brahman with attributes. Thus he experienced the truth that Christianity, too, was a path leading to God-Consciousness. Till the last moment of his life he believed that Christ was an Incarnation of God."—Mahendra Nath Gupta, *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, trans. Swami Nikhilananda (Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center of New York, 1942).

* Cf. parallel references in Mark 8:31–33 and Luke 9:22.

suffering on the cross for everlasting joy in Spirit, I am offended, O Satan, at thy words. Even though they are garbed with Peter's voice and sympathy, they clearly vibrate not with the wisdom of Cosmic Consciousness but with the deluded perception of worldly persons, who 'savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.'"

The strong retort of Jesus emphasized that to yield to the thought of banishing his coming ordeal would be to embrace delusion and thus weaken his preparedness to perform the divine sacrifice of his body as had been revealed to his vision. He thus rejected Peter's sympathy, knowing that in the echo of those words was the temptation of Satan who wanted to thwart the plan of God.

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> *Then said Jesus unto his disciples, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Matthew 16:24–26).*

Parallel reference:

> *And when he had called the people unto him with his disciples also, he said unto them, "Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it. For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Mark 8:34–37).**

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* Cf. additional parallel reference in Luke 9:23–25.

The Gospels record that Jesus voiced this thought on several different occasions; see for example Matthew 10:38–39 (Discourse 41) and John 12:25 (Discourse 66): "He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal."

"Any devotee who would attain my Christ Consciousness must by meditation rise above the consciousness of his physical self, 'deny himself,' and keep his attention constantly focused in Christ peace, 'follow me,' even while he is daily crucified by trials and his spiritual aspirations tormented by restlessness and distractions. For whosoever will 'save his life,' keeping it familiarly identified with the body's comforts and demands, and foolishly coddle the body's unwillingness to make the necessary spiritual effort in the struggle to meditate, shall find that ultimately he will 'lose his life' of temporary joys that he sought to protect. But the devotee who is prepared to 'lose his life for my sake,' to give up bondage to a solely material existence for the sake of attaining Christ Consciousness realized in deep meditation, will certainly find the life of his true Self, eternally endowed with the ever new bliss of Spirit.

Spiritual discipline for attaining Christ Consciousness

"Any devotee who lives the Christ life and preaches about it 'for my sake and the gospel's,' sharing with others the vibrations of his divine perceptions and setting an example of moral and spiritual behaviour, forgoing the life of the body if necessary, will attain immortality. Even if a man 'gains the whole world,' its surfeit will profit him little, for he can benefit from only an iota of its comforts. The kingdom of every monarch, no matter how opulent and powerful, will be lost to them at the time of death.

"The material man finds at the end of his life that he is without riches as well as without God-consciousness; by his unspiritual life, he will 'lose his own soul' in the mires of delusion. Nothing he gains in gratifying earthly pleasures, however great, will suffice to compensate for the lost immortal happiness of his true soul-consciousness, redeemable only in the transcendence of meditation."

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"For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works. Verily I say unto you, there be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom" (Matthew 16:27–28).

Parallel reference:

> *"Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels."**
>
> *And he said unto them, "Verily I say unto you, that there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power" (Mark 8:38—9:1).*†

66 When the glory of the Cosmic Consciousness of the Father with its angelic joys and wisdom are revealed to the Son of man, the soul consciousness dwelling in and working through the instrumentality of the body, then the devotee who has faithfully toiled in meditation to reap the harvest of God-consciousness knows that everyone is rewarded according to his own spiritual labours."‡

What Jesus meant by predicting "the Son of man coming in his kingdom"

Owing to the law of cause and effect (one's karma), which governs the outcome of all actions, every devotee finds himself farther from or nearer to God commensurate with the degree of his efforts in meditation. "Corresponding to the depth of his meditation, the devotee finds the angels of different states of Self-realization revealed in his human consciousness (Son of man) through ecstatic communion with Cosmic Consciousness. Advanced devotees can also perceive in the light projected from Cosmic Consciousness the luminous angelic forms of liberated and saintly souls who dwell in the glorious heavenly regions of the Father's infinite consciousness.

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*Jesus makes a similar statement in Matthew 10:32–33 and Luke 12:8–9; see commentary in Discourse 41.

†Cf. additional parallel reference in Luke 9:26–27.

‡While this verse of Matthew 16:27 ("For the Son of man shall come in the glory of the Father with His angels"), addressed to the disciples of Jesus, refers to the worthy devotee's reward of the glory of Cosmic Consciousness realized in exalted meditation, similar words expressed by Jesus in Matthew 25:31—in the context of his impending death and resurrection—describe his own immortal glorification in Cosmic Consciousness and his everlasting enthronement in the Infinite Christ Consciousness—God's Cosmic Intelligence that is the supreme witness and judge of the lives of all persons. (See Discourse 68.)

"Whosoever steps out of the commonality of delusion and experiences Christ Consciousness and its revelations of truth, 'me and my words'—which the devotee contacted within during his ecstasy of Cosmic Consciousness, with its sacred angels of inspirations springing from it—but is reluctant, 'shall be ashamed,' to give testimony to the joy and wisdom of this state to body-identified, divine-bliss-deserting nonbelievers for fear of persecution or ridicule, will find a diminishment of the Christ Consciousness within him: 'of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed,' he shall be considered unworthy of that consciousness."

The devotee's duty to inspire other souls

Jesus knew that his message of spiritual reform would antagonize the polity and religious traditionalists. Not only he but his followers would be maligned. He thus emphasized the necessity of courage in one's convictions—to dare to be different, not from motivations of ego or overworked imagination, but from actual experience of truth in ecstatic divine communion.

There is a further implication in this Gospel passage. In the divine scheme, God has decreed that there is a duty man owes to man—the strong to aid the weak, the affluent to assist the needy, the healthy to serve the stricken; above all, the enlightened to illumine the path of the benighted.

Devotees who are not courageous and unselfish in trying to share the uplifting effects of their ecstatic joys with spiritually nescient souls will find their own consciousness returning to the limited confinement of the ego. By contrast, he who inspires other souls with his ecstasy will find himself expanding. A soul who feels his joy in other souls gradually feels himself as the Self of all, ultimately identified with the omnipresent consciousness of God the Father.

Self-appointed "saviours" are not implied, just humble souls who unassumingly reach out to inspire in others love for God and the desire to seek Him by transmitting their consciousness through the vibratory power of their example, words, thoughts, and prayers.

Devotees who contact Christ Consciousness in earth life but for fear of derision do not try to serve spiritually their ignorant brothers will find, after death, that they have no permanent place in Christ Consciousness. Spiritually selfish souls, visiting Christ Consciousness in the after-death state, are again sent back to earth to learn to share their spiritual attainments with body-bound mortals who also are

children of God, albeit yet sleeping in delusion. The divine law is that one's own final liberation requires that the God-realized devotee has also helped to liberate others.

Jesus concludes: "I truthfully declare unto you that there are some advanced devotees who are standing around me now who shall feel the all-powerful Cosmic Consciousness, 'the kingdom of God,' within their human consciousness, within 'the Son of man kingdom' of soul consciousness, before they make a transition from their present bodily existence to another plane."

And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart. And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light. And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elijah talking with him.

Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah."

While he yet spake; behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him."

And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their faces, and were sore afraid.

And Jesus came and touched them, and said, "Arise, and be not afraid."

And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only (Matthew 17:1–8).

Parallel reference:

And it came to pass about an eight days after these sayings, he took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray. And as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistering.

And, behold, there talked with him two men, which were Moses and Elijah: who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem. But Peter and

they that were with him were heavy with sleep: and when they were awake, they saw his glory, and the two men that stood with him.

And it came to pass, as they departed from him, Peter said unto Jesus, "Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah": not knowing what he said.

While he thus spake, there came a cloud, and overshadowed them: and they feared as they entered into the cloud. And there came a voice out of the cloud, saying, "This is My beloved Son: hear him."

*And when the voice was past, Jesus was found alone (Luke 9:28–36).**

The way by which Jesus was transfigured, and by which Elijah and Moses materialised themselves and came to him, was through transcendence of delusion's superimposed grossness of matter to reveal the underlying electrical nature of the body and the universe.

The transfiguration of Jesus' body into the glory of God's light

When Jesus was praying on the mountaintop, consciously communing with Cosmic Consciousness, the delusive human consciousness in him and his disciples, through which the lifetronic essence of the universe appears as matter, completely vanished. The body of Jesus, its very atoms shorn of the mask of delusion and the consciousness of solidity, appeared luminous and ethereal.†

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* Cf. additional parallel reference in Mark 9:2–8.

† The transmutation of bodily flesh into energy was also demonstrated in the Old Testament story of God speaking to Moses from a burning bush: "And the Lord said furthermore unto him, 'Put now thine hand into thy bosom.' And he put his hand into his bosom: and when he took it out, behold, his hand was leprous as snow. And he said, 'Put thine hand into thy bosom again.' And he put his hand into his bosom again; and plucked it out of his bosom, and, behold, it was turned again as his other flesh" (Exodus 4:6–7).

At the Lord's direction, Moses put his hand on his chest, over the fourth subtle cerebrospinal centre of life force (the heart, or dorsal, centre; *anahata chakra*), and his hand became charged with the astral life energy, the lifetronic *prana*, flowing from that centre. "Leprous" refers to the scintillating and disintegrating solidity of atoms of the hand, which metamorphosed into a snowy white light. His hand was no longer physical, but made of dancing atoms and glistening astral energy. By replacing his hand of pure energy on his chest, the materialising power of the life energy again re-formed the hand into flesh.

The intensified prayer of fervent devotion and meditation produces the ecstasy of oneness with Cosmic Consciousness. A master who experiences this highest ecstasy of God-consciousness actually sees his body and all material forms as made of the glory of God's light. He can simultaneously transfer his perception to his very advanced disciples that they too will behold the delusion-fused atomic structure of matter as made of creative electrical energy dancing in a harmonious rhythm to the bliss songs of God's ideations, the Everything of the Formless Eternal.

> Vanish the grosser lights into eternal rays
> Of all-pervading bliss....
> Four veils of solid, liquid, vapour, light,
> Lift aright.
> I, in everything, enter the Great Myself.
> Gone forever: fitful, flickering shadows of mortal memory;
> Spotless is my mental sky—below, ahead, and high above;
> Eternity and I, one united ray....*

Liberated masters who discard all three bodily encasements of the soul and merge in God's infinitude of Cosmic Consciousness still retain their individuality so that by mere willing they can come out of the Cosmic Essence in materialised forms in any way they choose—as informed visions of light or in bodies true to the perception of the five senses. Thus it was that Elijah and Moses, being liberated souls, formless in Spirit, materialised the visage of their earthly forms and appeared on the mountaintop in conversation with Jesus according to divine ordinance—in support of the special dispensation given to Jesus by God and witnessed by the disciples who would give testimony to the world.

The appearance of Elijah with Jesus was very significant, in that Elijah, as noted earlier, was none other than the guru-preceptor of Jesus in Jesus' former incarnation as Elisha. The appearance of Elijah on the mountaintop when Jesus was transfigured happened after John the Baptist was beheaded, and by this ordeal the soul of Elijah, incarnate for a time as John, was released in complete liberation in Spirit. The soul of the great prophet Elijah, at the end of that incarnation when he con-

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* From Paramahansa Yogananda's extensive poem "Samadhi" (*Autobiography of a Yogi*, Chapter 14), in which he described his own experiences in that transcendental state. *(Publisher's Note)*

sciously ascended into Spirit "in a fiery chariot" of the metamorphosis of matter into electrical scintillations,* was reborn as John the Baptist to play a lesser role on earth as the herald of Jesus and his special dispensation. With the death of John the Baptist, the subordinate consciousness temporarily assumed by Elijah was cast off. That is why he appeared to Jesus as Elijah, and not in his lesser role as John the Baptist, on the Mount of Transfiguration.

Spiritual significance of the presence of Elijah and Moses with Jesus

The relationship between Elijah and Jesus had spanned many incarnations, not known to man. In confirmation of that bond, Elijah appeared to Jesus Christ to give him his spiritual strength that he might, without wavering, overcome his uttermost ordeal of the sacrifice of his body on the cross.

Moses appeared also as he was the spiritual leader of the Jews, the people among whom Jesus was born and to whom primarily he preached his message of salvation. The appearance of Moses and Jesus together shows their inseparable connection in the spiritual path and that they had been connected in divine work in many incarnations. Moses the Master of the Jews, and Jesus the Master of the Christians, having appeared together on the Mount of Transfiguration in divine glory, ought to be an inspiration to the Jewish and Christian people alike to find and establish harmoniously their brotherhood in God.

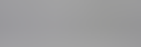
Moses and Jesus, in heaven now, consciously watch with grief the clannish differences that have arisen between the Jewish and Christian children of God. Moses showed his recognition and support of Jesus when he appeared with Jesus and Elijah. Their united presence was a divine beacon lit by God in the distant past that it might shine through future ages to dissolve the dark differences of denominationalism that exist between His Jewish and Christian children.

The vibrating voice of the Father and the celestial cloud that enveloped the three masters and the disciples of Jesus distinctly reveals that the Heavenly Father had a special message for the world through the united liberated lives of Jesus, Moses, and Elijah.

The appearance of Elijah with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration is a reassuring attestation of the everlasting bond of the guru-disciple relationship through which all truth-seeking souls find liberation, and in which pact, sealed by God, each finds from the other the

* See Discourse 2.

help needed as new roles and missions are undertaken in the sequels of God's drama. Jesus himself gives voice to this in the following verses.



And as they came down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, saying, "Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen again from the dead."

And his disciples asked him, saying, "Why then say the scribes that Elijah must first come?"

And Jesus answered and said unto them, "Elijah truly shall first come, and restore all things. But I say unto you, that Elijah is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them."

Then the disciples understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist (Matthew 17:9–13).

Parallel reference:

And as they came down from the mountain, he charged them that they should tell no man what things they had seen, till the Son of man were risen from the dead.

And they kept that saying with themselves, questioning one with another what the rising from the dead should mean.

And they asked him, saying, "Why say the scribes that Elijah must first come?"

And he answered and told them, "Elijah verily cometh first, and restoreth all things; and how it is written of the Son of man, that he must suffer many things, and be set at nought. But I say unto you, that Elijah is indeed come, and they have done unto him whatsoever they listed, as it is written of him" (Mark 9:9–13).

In the above words and other noted references, Jesus clearly acknowledges the truth of reincarnation, the only sound law of a compassionate Creator that can justify the seeming inequities of the human race. The prophets of the Old Testament did not merely believe in reincarnation, as evidenced in the prediction of Elijah's reincarnation, but knew through divine intuition how to foretell future events by reading the signs of the law of cause and effect.

Jesus predicts that his death would be similar to that of Elijah, reincarnated as John

The disciples of Jesus were often confounded by their master's enigmatic statements. They did not yet understand what Jesus meant about "rising from the dead." Furthermore, they pondered the prophecy in the scriptures that declared that Elijah the prophet would come again before the promised Messiah.* Knowing Jesus to be that foreordained saviour, the disciples questioned him about that prophecy concerning Elijah.

Jesus explained: "It has also been written in the scriptures how the Son of man, my physical self, would suffer many trials and find resistance from the people he would teach.† By the Christ Consciousness in me, I know and declare unto you that Elijah has already come before me, reborn as John the Baptist, who was then vilely treated, beheaded, and received back into heaven in the state of final liberation as Elijah—him whom you saw with me on the mount. The people did not recognise John the Baptist as the exalted prophet Elijah, thus they have killed him. I tell you that at the hands of ignorant people my body also will suffer an ignominious death, as did the blessed John the Baptist."

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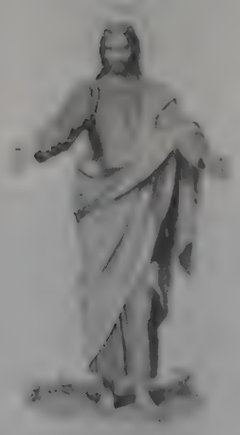
* Malachi 4:5 (see Discourse 2).

† "He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed" (Isaiah 53:3–5).



DISCOURSE 46

"If Ye Have Faith, Nothing Shall Be Impossible Unto You"

Jesus Mitigated the Evil Karma of Many

❖

Divinely Effective Faith Comes
Through Meditation and Self-Discipline

❖

Faith Gives Man Supernatural Sovereignty Over the Natural Order

❖

Definition of Faith:
That Which Perceives God's Invisible Cosmic Creative Powers

❖

Using Faith to Resolve Minor Difficulties
as Well as to "Move Mountains"

❖

A Child of God Should Never Accept
Domination by Mortal Limitations

"Have faith, not blind belief but intuitive conviction of the omnipotent presence of God within the enlightened Self, and doubt not that His Presence and power are within."

And when they were come to the multitude, there came to him a certain man, kneeling down to him, and saying, "Lord, have mercy on my son: for he is lunatick, and sore vexed: for ofttimes he falleth into the fire, and oft into the water. And I brought him to thy disciples, and they could not cure him."

Then Jesus answered and said, "O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I suffer you? Bring him hither to me."

And Jesus rebuked the devil; and he departed out of him: and the child was cured from that very hour.

Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, "Why could not we cast him out?"

And Jesus said unto them, "Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, if ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, 'Remove hence to yonder place'; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you. Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting."

—*Matthew 17:14–21*

DISCOURSE 46

"If Ye Have Faith, Nothing Shall Be Impossible Unto You"

And when they were come to the multitude, there came to him a certain man, kneeling down to him, and saying, "Lord, have mercy on my son: for he is lunatick, and sore vexed: for ofttimes he falleth into the fire, and oft into the water. And I brought him to thy disciples, and they could not cure him."

Then Jesus answered and said, "O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I suffer you? Bring him hither to me" (Matthew 17:14–17).

Parallel reference:

And when he came to his disciples, he saw a great multitude about them, and the scribes questioning with them. And straightway all the people, when they beheld him, were greatly amazed, and running to him saluted him.

And he asked the scribes, "What question ye with them?"

And one of the multitude answered and said, "Master, I have brought unto thee my son, which hath a dumb spirit; and wheresoever he taketh him, he teareth him: and he foameth, and gnasheth with his teeth, and pineth away: and I spake to thy disciples that they should cast him out; and they could not."

He answereth him, and saith, "O faithless generation, how

*long shall I be with you? How long shall I suffer you? Bring him unto me" (Mark 9:14–19).**

"O ye generation of people filled with ignorance and without Self-realization of Spirit, I have been so long with you, notwithstanding your lack of appreciation; how long shall I bear with you your agonies, as also taking onto myself your evil karma? Nevertheless, bring your son to me."

Jesus mitigated the evil karma of many

In the above, Jesus expressed the sorrow of endurance that attended the constant overburdening of himself with the evil karma of others. As a rich man might save a debtor from imprisonment by assuming the debt himself, so great souls by their will power can work out the karmic sufferings of others by taking it onto their own souls. But this fortuitous blessing by the intervening presence of a master happens only to repentant persons whose otherwise good karma attracts this mitigation of their karmic obligations.

Further, Jesus knew that by accumulating the evil karma or sinful actions of others it would ultimately be at the high cost of his own life. He offered up man's dearest possession, his body, for working out the karma of others by the terrible ordeal of his crucifixion; and then by superior soul force he resurrected his body and proved his victory over all constraints of Nature. Even though Jesus realized that to cure the serious deep-seated condition of the man's possessed son meant that he himself would have to carry much evil karma of the boy, still, out of his infinite compassion, Jesus agreed to heal him.

And Jesus rebuked the devil; and he departed out of him: and the child was cured from that very hour (Matthew 17:18).

Parallel reference:

And they brought him unto him: and when he saw him, straightway the spirit tare him; and he fell on the ground, and wallowed foaming.

* Cf. additional parallel reference in Luke 9:37–41.

The Transfiguration

And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart, and was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light. And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elijah talking with him....

A bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him."

—Matthew 17:1–3, 5

When Jesus was praying on the mountaintop, consciously communing with Cosmic Consciousness, the delusive human consciousness in him and his disciples, through which the lifetronic essence of the universe appears as matter, completely vanished. The body of Jesus, its very atoms shorn of the mask of delusion and the consciousness of solidity, appeared luminous and ethereal.

The intensified prayer of fervent devotion and meditation produces the ecstasy of oneness with Cosmic Consciousness. A master who experiences this highest ecstasy of God-consciousness actually sees his body and all material forms as made of the glory of God's light. He can simultaneously transfer his perception to his very advanced disciples that they too will behold....

—Paramahansa Yogananda

Painting by Carl Bloch

And he asked his father, "How long is it ago since this came unto him?"

And he said, "Of a child. And ofttimes it hath cast him into the fire, and into the waters, to destroy him: but if thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us."

Jesus said unto him, "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth."

And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief."

When Jesus saw that the people came running together, he rebuked the foul spirit, saying unto him, "Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee, come out of him, and enter no more into him."

*And the spirit cried, and rent him sore, and came out of him: and he was as one dead; insomuch that many said, "He is dead." But Jesus took him by the hand, and lifted him up; and he arose (Mark 9:20–27).**

Jesus remonstrated: "O wicked disembodied spirit, condemned to be deaf and dumb in the astral world because of your evil karma, why are you conjuring more evil karma for yourself by vilely possessing this child before me, instead of rightly working out the effects of your past evil actions? I command you to come out of this boy's body and to possess him no more."

Many are the torments that disembodied wicked spirits may experience in the after-death state according to their store of evil accumulated in earth life. In this instance, Jesus recognised a malevolent spirit that was karmically deaf and dumb who possessed an earthly body in order to regain auditory and vocal powers. However, so exacting is the immutable law of cause and effect that the vocal cords and auditory nerves of the unlawfully possessed body, though otherwise healthy, were rendered useless.

Owing to this boy's being possessed since childhood, his nervous system was completely exhausted. Thus, when the devilish spirit was cast out of him by Jesus, the child appeared as dead. But Jesus took him by the hand, charging him with cosmic energy as he lifted him up; and immediately the cured boy was fully restored.

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* Cf. additional parallel reference in Luke 9:42.

Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, "Why could not we cast him out?"

*And Jesus said unto them, "Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, if ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, 'Remove hence to yonder place'; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you. Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting" (Matthew 17:19–21).**

Comparable references to the power of faith spoken on other occasions:

And the apostles said unto the Lord, "Increase our faith."

And the Lord said, "If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this sycamine tree, 'Be thou plucked by the root, and be thou planted in the sea'; and it should obey you" (Luke 17:5–6).

* * *

And Jesus answering saith unto them, "Have faith in God. For verily I say unto you, that whosoever shall say unto this mountain, 'Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea'; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith. Therefore I say unto you, what things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them" (Mark 11:22–24).†

Jesus explained to his disciples: "To cast out the evil spirit long lodged in the afflicted boy required steady faith. When you witnessed the frightfulness of his condition and failed to heal him by one or two attempts, you disbelieved; your wavering faith was unable to draw sufficient power from the Cosmic Source of all accomplishment and healing. Through my Christ-Consciousness perception, I declare unto you that if

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* Cf. parallel reference in Mark 9:28–29.

† These verses, and a parallel reference in Matthew 21:21–22, are part of the story of Jesus' withering the fig tree, which is commented on in Discourse 64.

by inner divine communion you have even the smallest seed, as a grain of mustard, of real intuitive conviction of God's power, any mountain of difficulty will be removed at your command.

Divinely effective faith comes through meditation and self-discipline

"But I strongly admonish you that this all-accomplishing power of faith cannot come by mere belief or intellectual conviction, nor by halfhearted or intermittent efforts at Self-realization. It comes by constant intense prayer-demands for Cosmic Consciousness in deep meditation and by nonattachment to the body through the discipline of moral living and regular purificatory fasting. When you are intuitively guided by communion with God in ecstatic meditation, your will and faith will then be one with the Father's limitless power."

Jesus sought to awaken in languid man the cosmic conviction possessed by God, the power of His absolute knowing, by which He created stars, planets, human beings—the universe and everything therein. Through His self-evolved power of divine will and self-evolved confidence in the all-creative force of His thought and ideations, He has "frozen" into being the infinite manifestations of matter and intelligence. God knows by the incontrovertible immediacy of omniscience that He is all-powerful. With this almighty conviction, nothing is impossible to Him; whatever He thinks, He can do by divine fiat or by so ordering the workings of His cosmic laws.

Being made in God's image, man too has that omnipotent will and self-confidence hidden within his soul, empowering him to create or accomplish anything he can imagine. When one dislodges from his soul the octopus grip of human habits and hereditary beliefs, replacing impossibility consciousness with the realized power of faith, one gains over the natural order a supernatural sovereignty. It is by deeper and deeper meditation that one can unite his intuitive imaging power with the almighty conviction of God and realize the relation of intuition and matter. All manifestations of cosmic vibration are controlled and guided by God's ideated intuitions. When by God-communion the convictions of advanced souls are attuned with God's conviction of His own omnipresent omnipotence, that faith creates vibrations so potent that if so willed it can literally uproot a mountain and cast it into the sea.

Faith gives man supernatural sovereignty over the natural order

Jesus was thus not speaking merely allegorically. He actually meant that even as God causes mountains to rise from beneath the

seas, or continents to sink from sight, so liberated souls who are in tune with Him are in touch with that unlimited power—as was Jesus, and also Bhagavan Krishna, of whom it is told he once suspended an entire mountain in the air, like a protective umbrella, to shelter his people from a devastating storm. The consciousness of an ordinary man is omnipresent in the microcosm of his body; he can will that consciousness to move any part of the body. Similarly, one who has faith realization of his identity with the omnipresent Cosmic Consciousness can, by divine will, govern any aspect of the macrocosmic body of the universe—but he is unlikely to find an engaging interest in rearranging the Lord's cosmic scenery.

"Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen....Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear."* The phenomena of material creation can be apprehended by man's intellect and senses, but not the supersensory astral and causal vibratory forces that underlie and structure the physical world. The light of intuition is required to reveal the subtle workings of the heavenly powers. That light is the soul's realization of truth, which expresses itself through intuitive knowing, and the resultant conviction is faith. Thus, *faith* is the term used by Jesus to denote that which perceives the invisible cosmic creative powers, and God as the final Substance. Faith in, i.e., intuitive knowledge of, Cosmic Consciousness as the prime mover of all atomic creation bestows power to act on any portion of the universal structure.

Definition of faith: that which perceives God's invisible cosmic creative powers

The sense-dependent, matter-worshipping man is a consummate infidel—disavowing, because he has no "evidence of things not seen," the invisible forces of an invisible God that would bestow on him all "things hoped for." Nevertheless, even ignorance-blinded individuals possess some degree of faith: a latent intuition of God's presence and power within that gives birth to all human hopes and incentive to achieve. This unconscious faith is the secret fountainhead of man's expectations of fulfilment of his copious dreams. Human hope, if used rightly as motivation to cultivate higher potentials of mind, imagination, and will, ultimately produces true faith, the intuitive realization of the divine powers in the soul.

* Hebrews 11:1, 3.

"Lord, increase our faith," the disciples petitioned Jesus. Even a little intuitive faith can accomplish wonders, far more than mere belief or the enhancing power of imagination. One who does not meditate or contact God might stand in front of a tree and with all his human belief, abetted by a strong imagination, say: "I command you, be thou plucked by the root, and be thou planted in the sea." Naturally, it will not do so. Miracles cannot be demonstrated by conditional belief or imagination, but by uniting the Self with God.

How to develop a belief into the absolute conviction of faith

There is a way to cultivate belief until it becomes faith or absolute conviction. Belief is the initial recipient attitude of the mind necessary for planting the seed of a hoped-for outcome. As a successful farmer learns the laws of planting for a good harvest, so a truth-seeking individual must learn how to cultivate the soil of belief so that it may yield the desired result. When the seed of his aspiration is continuously watered with belief in the Self and in the intercession of a master—as when the disciples appealed to Jesus—it sprouts into faith that the desired result will inevitably be accomplished.

Jesus knew the laws of truth; he was equipped with almighty God-consciousness and knew that anyone who trusted in him and his words would create a channel through which he could easily transfer to the supplicator the powers within his Christ Consciousness. Ordinary spiritual teachers cannot surcharge people as Jesus did, because they themselves are not always convinced of the power of divine will and intuition-born faith and are thus lesser conduits for its transmission to others.

Jesus taught from his own experience and example that soul intuition and its supremely accomplishing power of faith develop in those who meditate deeply and do not stimulate body consciousness by constant dependence only on material sustenance.* When the soul continuously remains identified with the delusive dream-body, it puts on the weaknesses of that mass of matter and forgets to exercise the all-powerful faith hidden within itself. Faith is lost by sorrowing over or being elated by the changing conditions of sickness and health that

* "Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: (For we walk by faith, not by sight:) We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord" (II Corinthians 5:6–8).

invade the body. The soul can neither be sick nor healthy, for it is made in the bodiless image of perfect God. Anyone who is jubilant because of the dream health of the body or grieved by its dream sickness, or who is afraid of disease and distressed when it comes, is dreaming the cosmic delusion and is not inwardly free. Hence every devotee should meditate on his transcendent blissful Self and preserve that ever newly joyous state of consciousness. It is greater to realize the perfection of the soul, which is immortal, than just to acquire by mental power health of the temporal body, which has to be cast away at the call of death. When the consciousness of the devotee is finally united to Cosmic Consciousness, which sustains and controls the medley of dream forms in the cosmic dream universe, then through that consciousness "all things are possible to him."

Jesus stressed to his disciples that the way to rouse the power of faith is to realize the presence of God within one's own Self. To produce difficult supernatural healings or other miraculous phenomena, it is necessary first to accomplish the supreme miracle: uniting the soul with God to the conscious satisfaction of the Self and the Divine Father.

Using faith to resolve minor difficulties as well as to "move mountains"

It is in the nature of faith to create anything it wants. One who believes very strongly in the fulfilment of a desire will sooner or later find it comes to pass. But before one can move mountains, he must be able to demonstrate that divine power in little accomplishments in life. One should develop faith by working it to resolve minor difficulties; he will thereby prepare himself to cut through the Gordian knots of life's most recondite troubles.

"Therefore I say unto you, what things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them." Those who concentrate prayerfully and continuously on any goal will see that no matter how daunting its attainment they will be led to the means of receiving what they seek. One's strong faith can work miracles by superimposing helpful thoughts in the brains of others. For example, before seeking employment or negotiating for something desired, one should concentrate his thoughts and prayers strongly in a positive way. God will respond by dropping into the minds of others those thoughts that are in harmony with whatever one is seeking. It is true that this is not direct materialisation as Christ was able to demonstrate. Still, strong thoughts create conditions in kind; they set in motion the minds of others who will later step forward to assist in realizing the goal one

is visualizing. And when faith becomes very powerful, God Himself will so order the sought-for attainment. Why not? He created everything in the beginning by special creation. He told the flowers to be flowers and water to be water and electrons to be electrons. If anyone can image his wants and will them with indomitable strength, and unwaveringly "believe that ye receive them, ye shall have them"—but not otherwise.*

It is helpful to practice cultivating concentrated visualization. One way is to sit quietly in a totally darkened room and visualize the surroundings. Try to think of all the various items in that room, mentally seeing them in minute detail. Then turn on the light and see how accurately and completely you were able to identify the decor while sitting in the dark. Now turn out the light again and visualize everything in another room. Concentrate deeply until you see every corner and every object in that room. This simple practice works. As one develops the power of visualization, it can, within reason, bring to pass anything one wishes. Nearly everyone at some time has had the experience of attaining something they had long envisioned and wished for, even though fulfilment was unlikely. Concentration is the key, along with faith.

However, concentration and visualization alone are not sufficient; merely to think of oneself as having the status of a millionaire will not make it so. In addition to positive thoughts one must have adamant will power and unshakable faith. The will must be made so strong that it can bring whatever one visualizes into reality through one's applied concerted effort. Remember, "God helps him who helps himself."

One's goals must be within the bounds of wisdom. When Jesus urged unfaltering belief as the way to achieve what one asks for in prayer, he did not mean that if all people prayed and thoroughly believed they would be as rich as Croesus within a year, their desire would be granted. They could not so expeditiously change their habits, the karma of their present and past lives, and their environmental opportunities, just by prayer and belief, to suddenly become opulent. According to the present karmic conditions on earth such a

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* "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord. A double minded man is unstable in all his ways" (James 1:5–8).

happening is impossible. Human prosperity requires human meriting and is conditioned by environment. There are in this world scores of people who have superior mentalities and more will power than Henry Ford; but they are not placed in a similarly favourable environment, with the same karmic background, that made it possible for Henry Ford to amass his fortune. In fact, the average person of today will likely have to work hard for many more lives before the law of financial evolution would permit him to enter the millionaire class. All human achievements have to be karmically earned, all human faculties of merit acquired. There are many abilities to be cultivated besides that of making money, many forms of karmic evolution more important to one's welfare than financial evolution.

Nevertheless, by prayer, meditation, and good actions all human beings can develop spiritually and attain communion with God and intuitive conviction of His almighty presence within themselves. Because man as the immortal soul is made in the image of God, he can in a short time—even within one life—regain his consciousness of oneness with the Divine. Anyone established in that unity can make himself immeasurably wealthy and powerful if he wants to be. But, paradoxically, material gain is never a goal of the enlightened man!

Fulfilment of Jesus' promise comes with realization of God's presence within

Jesus realized, "I and my Father are one."* He could perform miracles, heal the sick, and raise the dead because he was established in his identity with God. Sometimes people pray unwisely or irrationally, asking for things their karma and stage of evolution do not permit them to have at present, believing that their prayers will be fulfilled. But when their desires are not granted, their belief—which was in fact more of an expression of their importunate wants rather than an exercise in faith—turns into doubt about the efficacy of prayers and the existence of a caring God who responds to man's needs.

People blunder into this negative state of false reasoning because they take the saying of Jesus, "All things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive,"† without its context: "If ye have faith and doubt not...."‡ One must have faith, not blind belief but in-

* John 10:30 (see Discourse 52).

† Matthew 21:22.

‡ Matthew 21:21.

tuitive conviction of the omnipotent presence of God within the enlightened Self, and doubt not that His Presence and power are within. If one first has this intuitive realization of God, through meditation and communion, then one cannot have doubts about the responsive immediacy of His almighty power. Therein lies the truth of Jesus' words. *After* attaining God-consciousness, then whatever one prays and believes, he can accomplish.

These words of Jesus instruct believers in prayer that because of the instability of their faith, there is no assurance that all prayers will be answered in the manner desired. So long as one is in a state of disunion with God, it is not enough merely to "believe" and pray labouriously. The devotee should first seek contact with God; and even after experiencing God-communion, he must take care to believe—"shall not doubt in his heart"—that whatever he desires as he prays is even then coming to him through the almighty power of God; then he shall receive it.

A human beggar receives a beggar's pittance, but a divine son who is one with God receives the son's share. That is why man as a human beggar should not expect his prayers for the divine inheritance of great powers of fulfilment to be granted. But when by meditation man dissociates himself from his physical limitations and concentrates on the unlimited power of his soul, then he acknowledges his immortality and changes his status from that of a deluded mortal, subsisting on the chance crumbs of his karma, to that of divine sonhood, with heaven and earth at his command.

The follower of the scientific path of freedom from material limitation works at developing mental power. By yoga techniques of meditation, affirmation, and visualization, and by unshakable will power and faith, the power of mind can gradually be made to exceed the delusion-imposed limitations of body consciousness. When the thoughts are brought under control, they become veritable miracle workers. The advancing devotee can use that mind power to heal the body and to relieve its suffering. It is tragic to think of persons who endure years and years of cancer or other forms of wretchedness. Man's susceptibility to suffering comes through ignorance of his innate divinity; how indolently he neglects the development of the power that can master the body and keep it in the palm of the hand of his soul. By control of the mind he could become indifferent to the con-

A child of God should never accept domination by mortal limitations

dition of the body, in health as well as disease, even as a person under anesthetic can be operated on without feeling any pain. The germ of every trouble starts in the mind; yet in that mind is also the Infinite Power that most persons have never used.

We are children of God with all His powers latent within us; we must never part with those powers by supinely accepting domination by the mortal self. Life is not just prosperity and health; life is battle. Saint Francis was blind and suffered numerous ailments and deprivations, yet he was able to heal the sick and raise the dead, and to rejoice in communion with God and Christ. Those who realize their oneness with God become inwardly free from the seeming ills of this dream life, and behold health and sickness, gain and loss, life and death, only as interesting phases of the dream. Of course, it would be foolish to presume such aboveness until one actually realizes that all matter is energy and that energy is the thought of God. One who strikes his dream head against a dream wall will get a dream fracture!

The body is man's cross and he has to bear it bravely and mentally rise above its complaints. Those who love the body and are attached to its happiness rebel against God as soon as suffering comes. Jesus was nailed to the cross and was suffering with all his sensibility; yet he prayed, "Father, forgive them." He could have destroyed his enemies with the power in his spiritual eye; he had the divine forces of God at his command. But by this singular act of love he demonstrated his greatest miracle as one proclaimed by God as a true divine son.

In Jesus there was no trace of egoity with its body-identified attachments and enslavement to desires, anger, and vengefulness. By gradual steps, each man has a soul destiny to rise to a Christlike life —to practise the universal Christ principles at all times. Life is a laboratory and testing ground in which man is to learn from his divine potentials how to be happy even when bruised by trials and grievous offenses.

Man's tests are not sent by God as punishment; His law is not "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth." If God fights man, then He is not God. He knows He got us into this mess and He wants us to get out, and the way is to endure our tests and conquer. Each person must learn to bear his cross while never losing faith in God. When the body suffers and one is yet able to say, "I am all right," he is transcending the body.

In this world, nature constrains man to live as an ordinary human

being, but within we must be gods. Jesus, like ordinary men, ate and slept and wept. In a moment of weakness and pain on the cross he cried out in his humanness, "My God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" But inside he was divine. He had bridged that gulf between human life and the divine life, and was established in his divinity. God made every man in His image so that by that potential he too might overcome his many tests and become established in his innate divinity.

Life is an anomaly; but no matter how hard it is to understand, man ought not to blame God for his ills. The book of life is like a novel. It is read with laughter and weeping and excitement almost to the end, with still many questions left unanswered until in the last chapter all the puzzles are solved. This book of life is written by the Master Novelist. The full meaning of His masterpiece will not be understood by anyone who has not himself become one with the Master, able then to read His thoughts between the divinely scripted lines. Until you know the wisdom and love that interlaces the plot of life, have faith in God.

Live the life divine: Conquer bad habits and do not cater all the time to the body. Give it to God. The devotee says: "Lord, You are the creator and owner of this body, so it is for You to help me care for it; and I know You will." A person with a hundred years of prosperity and health, but with no spiritual realization, is not as fortunate as one who is crippled, deaf, blind, and forsaken, but who has God in his heart.

To meditate and practice *Kriya Yoga* is the scientific way of solving the mystery of life and its inscrutable problems, by first solving the mystery of the Self and its relationship with Spirit. Gradually one attains; through the science of the Spirit comes power to do all miracles. To anyone trained in the methods of the masters the knowledge of the masters comes, fulfilling one's hope—the hope of all mankind—to set the spirit free.

"If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed...." Immortal words! spoken to shatter the bonds of doubt-enslaved mortals and rouse their native all-conquering will: "Beware, O ye mountains! Stand not in my way. Your ribs will be shattered and tattered today!"*

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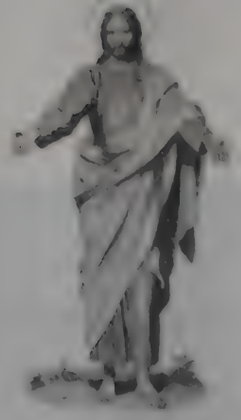
* From Swami Ram Tirtha's poem "Marching Light," set to music under the name "Swami Ram Tirtha's Song" by Paramahansa Yogananda in his *Words of Cosmic Chants* (published by Yogoda Satsanga Society of India).

To those who know God, everything is possible. God who strews star flowers of milky ways in the garden of space, God who lights the spark of life in the lamps of countless creatures, God who created every atom and feeling and thought in all sentient beings—what could be beyond His power? And what could be denied His devotees who are one with Him? Jesus meant exactly this. Removing difficulties by affirmations, visualization, and belief in the power of the mind, as persons of strong will power do, is nothing unusual. What Jesus taught is far greater: to tune the human will to the Divine Will and thereby destroy mortal limitations. This can be accomplished only by conscious communion with the all-powerful God and by realizing the inseparable union of soul and Spirit. Those who have such communion can never doubt that the almighty power of God resides in their hearts. They know that with divine inevitability whatever they wish will be fulfilled—will materialise—and whatever they say "shall come to pass."



DISCOURSE 47

"The Greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven": Humble Servants of All

Love and Humility Win the Heart of God

❖

"Become as Little Children":
Express the Pure, Childlike Heavenly Qualities

❖

Real Humility:
Transcending the Ego and Freeing the Soul to Identify With God

❖

Egotism: The Surest Sign of Ignorance

❖

Jesus' Ideals of Self-Sacrifice and Universal Service

"He who is veritably among the greatest considers himself the least.... He who gives of himself in ministering to all sits as a king on the throne of love in their hearts."

***And while they abode** in Galilee, Jesus said unto them, "The Son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of men: And they shall kill him, and the third day he shall be raised again." And they were exceeding sorry.*

And when they were come to Capernaum, they that received tribute money came to Peter, and said, "Doth not your master pay tribute?"

He saith, "Yes." And when he was come into the house, Jesus prevented him, saying, "What thinkest thou, Simon? Of whom do the kings of the earth take custom or tribute? of their own children, or of strangers?"

Peter saith unto him, "Of strangers." Jesus saith unto him, "Then are the children free. Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them, go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money: that take, and give unto them for me and thee."

At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?"

And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, and said, "Verily I say unto you, except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me.

"But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea."

—Matthew 17:22—18:6

[In a later incident, en route to Jerusalem for the last time, Jesus spoke again about the qualities of humility and service as the mark of spiritual greatness:]

Then came to him the mother of Zebedee's children with her sons, worshipping him, and desiring a certain thing of him.

And he said unto her, "What wilt thou?"

She saith unto him, "Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom."

But Jesus answered and said, "Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?"

They say unto him, "We are able."

And he saith unto them, "Ye shall drink indeed of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with: but to sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father."

And when the ten heard it, they were moved with indignation against the two brethren. But Jesus called them unto him, and said, "Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."

—*Matthew* 20:20–28

DISCOURSE 47

"The Greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven": Humble Servants of All

*And while they abode in Galilee, Jesus said unto them, "The Son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of men: and they shall kill him, and the third day he shall be raised again." And they were exceeding sorry.**

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* Cf. parallel references in Mark 9:30–32 and Luke 9:43–45.

Jesus addressed the question of taxation: "The kings of the earth gather tribute from their subjects, not from their own children, who go free. Likewise, those who are subject to the materiality of the world needs must give taxes to the earth's kingly authorities; but we, fully realizing ourselves as the children of God, consider all things as belonging to God and to us as His heirs. The Sovereign of the Cosmos, our Father, asks from us no compensation.

"Nevertheless, lest we offend the order of the world, let us do our part in paying taxes. Dear Simon, that you may see the glory of God as it shines upon me, His child, He will free me from the earthly obligation of this present taxation by miraculously sending to me the money required, a coin you will find in the mouth of a fish you will catch in the sea."*

At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?"

And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, and said, "Verily I say unto you, except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me" (Matthew 18:1–5).

Parallel reference:

And he came to Capernaum: and being in the house he asked them, "What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way?" But they held their peace: for by the way they had disputed among themselves, who should be the greatest. And he sat down, and called the twelve, and saith unto them, "If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all."

And he took a child, and set him in the midst of them: and when he had taken him in his arms, he said unto them, "Whoso-

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* Cf. Mark 12:17: "And Jesus answering said unto them, 'Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.'" (See Discourse 65.)

*ever shall receive one of such children in my name, receiveth me: and whosoever shall receive me, receiveth not me, but Him that sent me" (Mark 9:33–37).**

66 If any devotee aspires to be favoured in God's eyes, he should desire to be the least and humblest in the world's estimation, utterly forswearing egotism and selfishness. He should outwardly keep his consciousness ready to be of loving service to all, and inwardly endeavour, as long as he lives, to contact in meditation the Christ Consciousness inherent in the Holy Ghost Cosmic Vibration ('my name'). Anyone who by ecstatic communion absorbs in his Cosmic Vibration–saturated consciousness the divine childlike qualities—humility, purity, love, joy—receives me; that is, gradually attunes himself with and manifests my Christ Consciousness. And he who receives my Christ Consciousness pervading the finite cosmos ultimately receives the transcendent Cosmic Consciousness that sent the Christ Intelligence as Its pure reflection in vibratory creation. That soul, having been released from its egoistic body consciousness and having become united with the infinite Cosmic Consciousness is, in the eyes of metaphysical law, the greatest in the kingdom of heaven—one with the Peerless Spirit."

Love and humility win the heart of God

There is none greater than God, yet He does not push Himself forward as foremost in the cosmos. He silently serves all creation and all creatures to the end of eternity, without asking anything in return. His nonpareil greatness lies in His being in love with all and feeling His oneness with the throb of life in all things and creatures. Anyone who seeks acclaim in the universal order will be so judged if he is humble like God and eternally attuned with Him.

The egotist is soon cast down from the lofty seat of commendation in others' hearts and set at the lowest point of their estimation. But the person whose character bespeaks his unconditional love and spirit of service without selfish motive becomes a consummate emperor of benevolent power enthroned on all hearts within his kingdom of influence. There is nothing greater than love to draw to the worthy the love and esteem of others. Love, affirmed by humility, conquers human hearts and wins the heart of God. In the consciousness made

* Cf. additional parallel reference in Luke 9:46–48.

humble and receptive through devotion, God and the Great Ones will manifest. But to one who flaunts his merits to receive worldly recognition, They will not come. Humility and love alone can attract the divine response—nothing else.*

"Become as little children": Express the pure, childlike heavenly qualities

It is a literalistic nonunderstanding of these verses to think that one receives Christ just by the loving acceptance of children in Jesus' name. Receiving the Divine is not such a simple matter! Jesus meant that anyone who is in tune with his Christ spirit, and who with wisdom recognises and receives into his own heart the childlike heavenly qualities and guileless mentality innate in pure-hearted little ones, will dispossess his consciousness of the meanness of ego and open himself to the presence of Christ Consciousness.

In children, before the age when indiscriminate wilfulness and past karmic tendencies take control, one can see the natural manifestation of some of the attributes of Christ Consciousness. Therefore Jesus cites the example of children as a reminder to the devotee of the childlike qualities so often subverted in the adult mentality and habits —lack of egotism, body consciousness, selfishness, and attachment; and presence of purity, guilelessness, innocence, obedience, humbleness, meekness, love, trust, and joy. Only when a devotee becomes possessed of these qualities through deep meditation and practice of self-discipline does he prepare himself to receive and manifest Christ Consciousness.

The pure child's mind is by nature centred in the paradise, the elevated consciousness, of the spiritual eye; but with sexual arousal and the strong urgings of the senses for gratification, the mind is thrown out of the higher potentials of paradise and descends into identification with the fleshly senses and their absorption in the physical world. As a result, "Adam and Eve" (reason and feeling) are being expelled from Eden with each new generation of children as they are ensnared by delusion.† The heavenly consciousness with which souls were intended to enjoy earth life devolves into the dualistic perceptions of

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* "For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; 'I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit'" (Isaiah 57:15).

† See Discourse 7, explanation of "Adam and Eve" allegory.

good and evil with their fleeting pleasures and recurring pains that are the fated lot of the body-bound.*

On this axiom, Jesus taught those who seek greatness on earth or in heaven: "Verily I say unto you, except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."†

"Through the verification of my divine knowledge, I declare unto you that unless, by meditation and the proper guidance and help of a true guru, you change your ego-guided worldly nature into the soul-guided childlike nature, you will not be able to rise above your body-consciousness and let your inner Self enter into the ever-new bliss state of Christ Consciousness."

On the mountain peak of ego consciousness the raindrops of divine mercy do not remain. But in the expansive valley of childlike humbleness (unegotistical mentality) the mercy drops of divinity gather into a vast lake of wisdom.

Real humility: transcending the ego and freeing the soul to identify with God

An egotistical person identifies his unlimited soul consciousness with his various capabilities as derived from certain physical, mental, or astral powers and thus creates around himself a hedge of limitation which shuts out the greater part of Cosmic Consciousness. The almighty Heavenly Father does not limit Himself by egoistic identification of His consciousness with the possession of powers. He does not consider His powers as a dichotomy of Himself, and thus He is not even conscious of them. His infinite attributes are infinitely absorbed in the fathomless ocean of His humbleness. All good and beau-

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* "Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting: / The Soul that rises with us, our life's Star,
Hath had elsewhere its setting, / And cometh from afar:
Not in entire forgetfulness, / And not in utter nakedness,
But trailing clouds of glory do we come / From God, who is our home:
Heaven lies about us in our infancy! / Shades of the prison-house begin to close
Upon the growing Boy, / But He beholds the light, and whence it flows,
He sees it in his joy; / The Youth, who daily farther from the east
Must travel, still is Nature's Priest,
And by the vision splendid / Is on his way attended;
At length the Man perceives it die away, / And fade into the light of common day...."

—*Wordsworth, "Intimations of Immortality"*

† Cf. Matthew 19:14–15 and Mark 10:14–15: "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein." (See Discourse 62.)

tiful children of the Father, devotees who have been "converted" from ego consciousness, are humbly unaware of their priceless qualities. "Whosoever therefore shall humble himself," shall transcend the ego and free the soul to identify with God, "the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven," being one with the Supreme Being in His heavenly kingdom of bliss.

The Hindu scriptures say that one who knows Brahma or Spirit is Spirit; all souls came from God and will again become one with Him. But even after uniting with God, liberated masters preserve their individuality throughout eternity. They know that they come out of God to undertake new missions in new incarnations, and that they will merge again in Him; but never egotistically proclaim while incarnate that they *are* God. They fully realize, rather, that it is He who has become their many selves, manifesting as Christ, Krishna, Babaji, Lahiri Mahasaya, Sri Yukteswarji, and all other avatars and masters.*

There is no competition among souls who know God as to who is greater, for all are equal among those who are one with God. Yet disciples often dissent by exalting their own teacher above others. Many Hindus, for instance, say that the Lord Krishna is God's supreme incarnation; Christians accord that honour to Jesus Christ. But what would Jesus himself say? "He that is least among you all, the same shall be great."† The soul that has lost all egotism of the possessive little self, utterly humbled of I, me, and mine, knows only its identity with God, the One and Only, in whom there is no higher or lower.

A liberated saint, however great he appears in his earthly role, never claims to be God incarnate. Even Jesus, though he was one with God, said, "What my Father knows, I know not."‡

The wave cannot say, "I am the ocean," for the ocean can remain without the wave, but the wave cannot remain without the ocean. It is all right for a fully liberated master to say, "God has become myself," but he would never say, "I am God." The ocean has become the wave, but the wave is not the ocean. God is the Creator and sustainer of all liberated souls, and His grace grants them to feel, as did Jesus:

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* See commentary on Jesus' saying "I and my Father are one" (Discourse 52).

† Luke 9:48.

‡ "But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father" (Mark 13:32).

"I and my Father are One"; but His true children never presume on that identity by asserting, "I am God."

Once as a youth in India I met a teacher of high repute. Many of his followers had told me he was God Himself. In expectant awe and reverence I went to see him, and bowed down before him. But as soon as I looked straight into his eyes, he sought to impress me further and thundered, "I am God!" and I shouted back, "You don't say so!"

To counter my defiance, which he had never heard from those who followed him blindly, he became ridiculously supercilious. "How dare you blaspheme my presence," he shouted. "I am God!" I took a little mirror out of my shoulder bag and held it up to his face. I said, "Look at yourself! You are not God, but a plain egotist and anger slave."

I rose and, turning my back, started to leave. He followed me for some distance, entreating me, "Young man, come back!" I turned back, and looking into his eyes, I said, "Please do not utter this great blasphemy by proclaiming, 'I am God.' Though God may not expose your audacity, you hurt yourself by assuming a right to the throne of your Maker." To be sure he understood, I added, "If you sit on fire, claiming that you are fire, your body will be burned up, even though the fire doesn't want to harm you. So be forewarned. You who must live on food and drink and have not overcome death, do not be so foolish as to present yourself as the transcendent Supreme Creator of the Universe."

The saint's eyes welled up with tears. He took hold of my hand and said, "You have taught me a lesson in humbleness, and from today I shall try my utmost to become a true servant of God. I assure you, I shall never again say to anyone, 'I am God.'"

We embraced and parted in tears of joy, having mutually profited by each other's company. He must have been a real saint to have so readily, and humbly, recanted his fault.

Egotism: the surest sign of ignorance

Egotism is the surest sign of an ignorant man. A childlike humble nature in a wise man is the surest sign that he contacts God. There is a proverb that a few fish in a small vessel make a lot of splashing noise, but the movement of whales and large denizens in the ocean creates no such commotion. So egotists with their small minds in small waters of consciousness create a lot of clamour in bragging about their self-perceived merits; but great masters whose consciousness encompasses the divine vision of the whole cosmos, held in the

twinkling of an eye, hardly speak of their spiritual powers. Like the beloved God with whom they identify, they never use their powers for the sake of displaying their awesome spiritual nature.

Humbleness is not an assumed meekness; a pretense of humility does not make one a humble being. A person who remains busy within, perfecting himself in God's eyes and to the satisfaction of his own soul, is so intent in so doing that it leaves no scope for any desire to impress others with his accomplishments. Thus, when a person is wholly absorbed in being great and in selflessly doing great things so that he never thinks to talk about it as a personal achievement, he is truly humble. Conversely, the egotist remains mentally and physically idle in self-improvement, imagining that he graces the world with his mere presence and small doings; he loses no opportunity to convince others how great he is and to join in a chorus to sing his praises.

A wonderful child blooms like a flower, with no conscious intent to advertise its unfolding fragrance or beauty. So is the would-be divine man: he absorbs himself in expressing the glory of God, unaware, like a child, of his own qualities.

The truly great master-minds of India that I have seen are divinely childlike, displaying the qualities that are natural to a pure mind—sincerity, frankness, nonattachment, universality, uniformity of action-thought-speech, forgiveness, truthfulness, calmness, sweetness, laughter, and freedom from worry—minus the child's ignorance.

A person who does not cultivate the above-mentioned attributes latent in the soul is constantly beset with selfishness, suspicion, worries, fear, and attachment, which steal away his peace and leave him in misery. As a well-adjusted child lives happily, confidently secure in the protecting power and love of parents, so a divine man with childlike trust relinquishes fear, worldliness, and egotistical living by completely depending on the all-protecting power and divine love of God.*

"But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about

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* "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear has torment. He who fears is not made perfect in love" (First Epistle of St. John, 4:18).

*his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea" (Matthew 18:6).**

Jesus used the epithet "little ones" to refer not only to innocent children but also metaphorically to humble, pure-minded devotees—significantly, his own disciples.

"Whosoever shall persecute in any way a faithful disciple who manifests the spiritual purity of a humble child of God and who is in tune with the Christ Consciousness in me makes himself an instrument of the Evil Force and will attract to himself evil consequences. His spiritual and physical misery will be far greater than if a millstone be hung around his neck and he be cast into the sea."

Jesus typifies little children as the incarnation of undiluted divine purity and innocence, as also their counterpart in pure-minded saintly persons. Anyone who physically, mentally, or spiritually maltreats those in whose qualities God's nature is manifest acts against the Divine Manifestation itself. Thus Jesus points out that persecution of innocent children and saints, through whose purity God is distinctly manifest, is blasphemy against God Himself.

There is frequently a metaphorical as well as literal meaning intended in the words of Jesus: "Any person of misconduct who by egotism and inordinate kowtowing to his physical body deliberately offends one of the soul's childlike divine attributes, which are manifestations of my Christ Consciousness, will feel the millstone of misery heavy in his life, drowning him in the dark depths of the sea of ignorance."

This world is vast, peopled with such diverse mentalities that it is impossible to prevent incursions of wrongdoing against innocent children and saintly souls; but the law of karma knows all, and its intransigent judgment is dire toward anyone who deliberately offers himself to be a medium of wronging God's "little ones."

Then came to him the mother of Zebedee's children with her sons, worshipping him, and desiring a certain thing of him.

And he said unto her, "What wilt thou?"

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* Cf. parallel reference in Mark 9:42.

She saith unto him, "Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom."

But Jesus answered and said, "Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?"

They say unto him, "We are able."

And he saith unto them, "Ye shall drink indeed of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with: but to sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father."

And when the ten heard it, they were moved with indignation against the two brethren. But Jesus called them unto him, and said, "Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:20–28).

Parallel reference:

And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest.

*And he said unto them, "The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve. For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? is not he that sitteth at meat? But I am among you as he that serveth" (Luke 22:24–27).**

66 You know not what a stupendous thing you are asking. Are you able to drink wisdom from the cup of Cosmic Consciousness of which I shall drink? Have you prepared your conscious-

* Cf. additional parallel reference in Mark 10:35–45. See also Jesus' words in Matthew 23:11–12, Discourse 55: "He that is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted."

ness to be baptized with Cosmic Bliss, the baptism with which I am baptized?"

Jesus' ideals of self-sacrifice and universal service

They said to him, "We are able." And Jesus replied, "You are worthy to drink wisdom from the same cup, and you will be baptized with the same cosmic bliss of the vibration of the Holy Ghost with which I am baptized. But to sit on my right hand or on my left hand, as in some seat of authority in a kingdom in some specific point of space cannot be arranged by me, because the Heavenly Father enthrones all spiritualized souls in omnipresence."

Biblical scholars who profess to find no description of heaven by Jesus in the Gospels do not understand the hidden sense of his words. In this passage, Christ rejects any notion of his kingdom as a limited locality, thus indicating its omnipresent nature—in Christ Consciousness and Cosmic Consciousness.

When the other disciples heard the request favouring James and John, they were indignant against these two brothers. But Jesus called all of them to him and said to them, "You know how appointed rulers exercise dominion over the Gentiles and how their superiors assert authority over those rulers. But among you who are the children of God, equal in His eyes, there should be no posturing for authority over one another.

"Anyone who wants to be great among you shall minister to all and be the servant of all; the same shall hold true for whosoever in heaven's eyes would merit a seat of honour in God's kingdom. The Christ Consciousness in me came not to be served but to serve, and to offer divine light through the example of sacrifice and ideal living, that others following may be redeemed and attain the infinite kingdom of Cosmic Consciousness."

All souls, as with the disciples of Christ's teachings, who are able to attain the perception (baptism) of the Holy Ghost Cosmic Vibration and the wisdom and bliss of Christ Consciousness will be enthroned in the equalizing omnipresence of the one and same eternal God.

Jesus points out that the Christ Consciousness in him did not materialise on earth to gather the adoration of people, but to offer the highest service to them by demonstrating divine consciousness in acts of supreme physical, mental, and spiritual sacrifice. By his example Jesus extolled as a cardinal principle in his teachings—frequently

quoted, but rarely followed—this ideal, this grand truth, that he who is veritably among the greatest considers himself the least, and the servant of all. Chief among leaders is the person who inspires the best in others by his own acts of selfless service. Persons who equate greatness with the gratification of their desire for praise and approval from people receive only a superficial status and little sincere admiration. But he who gives of himself in ministering to all sits as a king on the throne of love in their hearts.

In the so-called civilised world, the one who is served by others, "he that sitteth at meat," is usually considered of a higher social standing than "he that serveth"; but it is different in heaven. By illustration and example Jesus stressed that according to divine law the superior position is that of service. Heavenly beings find supreme joy, not in receiving empty adoration, but in helping one another serve the universal order as God's angels and in aiding in the upliftment and liberation of souls.

DISCOURSE 48

"If Thy Hand or Thy Foot Offend Thee, Cut Them Off"

Jesus' Counsel on Renunciation of Evil

Neutralizing the Real Cause of Physical Evils and Subversion of the Soul

❖

How the Science of Yoga Bestows Victory Over Immoral Impulses

❖

The Orthodox Notion of Eternal Hellfire: An Utterly False Precept

❖

Advice for Aspirants Experiencing Temporary Spiritual Deterioration

❖

The Heavenly After-Death Experience of Pure-Hearted Persons

❖

God Permits No Soul to Become Forever Lost in Ignorance

❖

"Where Two or Three Are Gathered in My Name": The Power of United Concentration

"By self-control and the power of concentration...switch off the delusive inclinations that would offend or obstruct your indwelling God-consciousness."

"Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!

"Wherefore if thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off, and cast them from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire.

"Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven.

"For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost. How think ye? If a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray? And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth more of that sheep, than of the ninety and nine which went not astray. Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish.

"Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.

"Verily I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

"Again I say unto you, that if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

—Matthew 18:7–20

DISCOURSE 48

"If Thy Hand or Thy Foot Offend Thee, Cut Them Off"

Jesus' Counsel on Renunciation of Evil

*"Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!" (Matthew 18:7).**

Jesus emphasizes that even though in this world there will always be evil—that which divorces man's consciousness from God—that is no reason for a person deliberately to make himself a perpetrator of such offenses. Man in delusion often excuses his evil by rationalizing, "So many others are doing wrong and leading riotous lives, so it is all right for me to do likewise." Wisdom consists in recognising that it is in one's own interest to stay away from Satan's enticements. Evil propositions man under the fair guise of pleasure, but its temporary satisfactions end in misery and woe.

Thus, Jesus' words signified: "Physical, mental, and soul sufferings and woes ensue from the ignorance created by Satan's cosmic delusion. Because of Satan's rebellion against God's Word (Holy Vibration), the presence of evils, 'offences,' is unavoidable so long as this delusive world of duality exists.† Man did not create anger, greed, self-

* Cf. parallel reference in Luke 17:1.

† See Discourse 7.

ishness, lust; their potential was implanted in him by Satan to counter the divine qualities bequeathed to him in his God-created soul. But each human being has free will to make a choice: either to follow the wisdom of the soul and embrace its attributes of goodness or to align himself with the evil passions stimulated within him by cosmic delusion. Everlasting joy and liberation are the blessings of goodness. Woe and threefold misery are the lot of the physically identified man who, acting in response to the urges of delusion, vents the evil propensities within him and lets them flow outward as noxious actions.*

"That is why whenever your hands, feet, eyes, or any other organ of sensation and action are used or incited to be used as instruments of evil, you should cut off the attention and currents of life energy that actuate them, employing will power and inner self-control."

> *"Wherefore if thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off, and cast them from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire" (Matthew: 18:8–9).*†

Parallel reference:

> *"And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the king-*

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* "Lust, anger, and greed—these constitute the threefold gate of hell leading to the destruction of the soul's welfare. These three, therefore, man should abandon. O Arjuna! By turning away from these three entrances to the realm of darkness, man behaves according to his own highest good and thereafter reaches the Supreme" (*God Talks With Arjuna: The Bhagavad Gita* XVI:21–22).

† Jesus had previously given this counsel in Matthew 5:30; see Discourse 27 for additional commentary in that context.

"Become as Little Children"

"Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me."

—Matthew 18:4–5

Jesus cites the example of children as a reminder to the devotee of the childlike qualities so often subverted in the adult mentality and habits—lack of egotism, body consciousness, selfishness, and attachment; and presence of purity, guilelessness, innocence, obedience, humbleness, meekness, love, trust, and joy. Only when a devotee becomes possessed of these qualities through deep meditation and practice of self-discipline does he prepare himself to receive and manifest Christ Consciousness.

—Paramahansa Yogananda

Drawing by Heinrich Hofmann

dom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire: Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.

*"For everyone shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt. Salt is good: but if the salt have lost his saltness, wherewith will ye season it? Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another" (Mark 9:43–50).**

With graphic imagery, Jesus exhorts his followers: "Cut away anything and everything that keeps you enmeshed in the evils of ignorance! Unless you use discriminative wisdom to become attuned to God, your life will be a veritable hell of burning unfulfilled desires and gnawing worms of fears, worries, and troublemaking ungodly tendencies, which will torment you incarnation after incarnation. Excise from your life those impulses that impede your attempts to unite with Eternal Life—giving up even the body itself if that should be necessary. Brook no obstruction in your path to supreme everlasting happiness!"

Neutralizing the real cause of physical evils and subversion of the soul

The astonishing counsel of Jesus is primarily, of course, metaphorical:

"I am not telling you to dismember yourself if you have committed wrong actions; for by doing so you would destroy only the instruments of evil, not the mental tendencies and desires that willed and actuated the offense. Physically maiming innocent bodily organs might preclude some physical acts of evil, but would not neutralize or prevent mental evils, the real cause of physical evils and of the subversion of the godly qualities of the soul. Evil must be destroyed from within. Cut off the mental impulse that activates the motor nerves ('hands and feet') and pluck it from the sensory nerves ('eye') when you are led to see and desire evil or to act evilly. By self-control and the power of concentration that lifts the thoughts to divine perceptions, switch off the delusive inclinations that would offend or obstruct your indwelling God-consciousness, and then forever cast them off from your being.

"It is better for you to be halt or maimed of temporary sense pleasures in material life by sacrificing desire for these indulgences in order to enter into the consciousness of divine joy and eternal life, rather than to remain slavishly identified with the body, allowing the

* "If the salt have lost his saltness...": Cf. parallel reference in Luke 14:34–35. See also commentary on parallel reference in Matthew 5:13 (Discourse 26).

sense organs and nervous system to burn continuously with physical lust, greed, and material cravings. Sensuality, being everlastingly insatiable, constantly stirs the fire of the misery of unfulfilment. If you do not forsake your evil mortal habits during your earth life, you will carry those torturing worms of harmful tendencies into the astral world at death, and thence into a new incarnation—perpetuating or making everlasting the 'fire that never shall be quenched.'"

The message in these verses is threefold—addressed, respectively, to the Christlike martyr, the ordinary person in need of moral precepts, and the yogi who practices meditation for God-communion, as follows:

Threefold application of Jesus' counsel on rejecting evil

1. Jesus' words have been a source of strength and inspiration to saintly martyrs whose role it is actually to sacrifice their physical body for a divine cause. Cranmer, sixteenth-century martyr, wrote with his right hand several recantations, under torture, of religious convictions that had caused him to be sentenced to be burned at the stake. Later, repenting of his faithlessness, he declared to his codefendant: "Latimer, my unworthy hand shall burn first!" When taken to the stake to be put to death, Cranmer smilingly held his right hand in the fire to be consumed first, and then consecrated his whole body to the flames, consciously ascending into the heavenly region of Spirit.*

Jesus himself had set an uttermost example in the literal observance of bodily sacrifice on the cross to do the will of his Father. Even though physically maimed, he was gloriously resurrected and gained everlasting life. If instead he had listened to the temptations of satanic delusion and chosen bodily safety and material happiness and pro-

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* From *Encyclopaedia Britannica:* "Thomas Cranmer (1489–1556) was the first Protestant archbishop of Canterbury (1533–56), adviser to the English kings Henry VIII and Edward VI. As archbishop, he put the English Bible in parish churches, drew up the Book of Common Prayer, and composed a litany that remains in use today. Denounced for promoting Protestantism by the Catholic Mary I, he was convicted of heresy and burned at the stake....As he had promised, he steadfastly held his right hand —which 'had offended' by signing the false recantations—into the flame until it was consumed. His brave and dignified end made an enormous impression."

Hugh Latimer was the bishop of Worcester and a vocal spokesman for Protestantism; he was also arrested in the conflict between Catholics and Protestants and burned at the stake a few months before Cranmer. At his death Latimer encouraged his fellow victim Ridley with his famous last words: "...we shall this day light such a candle, by God's grace, in England as I trust shall never be put out."

tected himself from crucifixion, it would have contemptuously "offended" his Christ-conscious soul, which led him to cooperate willingly with the foreordained divine plan for the offering of his body in recompense for the offences of many.

Few souls are called upon to embrace the truth in these verses in such a dramatic way. Nevertheless, none escape the essential lesson applicable to all. Those for whom the well-being and gratifications of the body supplant the desire to meditate and be in God-consciousness are foolish, "offending" one's true Self, the soul, by forsaking eternal happiness and immortality in preference for the short-lasting physical pleasures—with attendant miseries—of a few years of bodily existence on earth.

2. Therefore, applied to the moral conduct enjoined on all human beings, Jesus' words are an exhortation to cut off the offending "hand"—avaricious love of money, material acquisitiveness; and likewise the misguided "foot"—attachment to the material activities of life; and to pluck out the "eye" of shortsighted worldly understanding, in order to gain the enduring joy of a spiritual life:

An exhortation to destroy material greed, restlessness, and ignorance

"If your 'hand' of greed for money and possessions offends the divine law by keeping you from attaining spirituality, do not hesitate to destroy that unspiritual acquisitiveness. It is preferable that you temporarily endure deprivation of inordinate material perishables in order to have everlasting joy, rather than consign yourself to the misery of an inferno of insatiable earthly cravings.

"If material activity, the 'foot,' prevents you from meditating and attaining the kingdom of ever new joy felt in meditation, then by all means cut off the excesses of obstructing worldly pursuits. Far better it is to gain the fulfilment of eternal life than transitory gratification through restless outward striving and busy-ness—which fan an ever-increasing flame of never-to-be-satisfied material desires, spreading from one incarnation to another.

"If any devotee finds his material 'eye' of understanding beclouded by ignorance, in conflict with his spiritual aspirations, he should give up that defective vision. It is better to enter by meditation into the kingdom of eternal joy with one intuitional eye of wisdom than, having two material eyes of duality and relativity, to remain burning in the hellfire of miserable unsatisfying material consciousness.

"Anyone who remains engrossed in material activities and desires, failing to attain divine wisdom and heavenly happiness, and passes from mortal life in that state, will find after death the voracious worms of worries, unsatisfied cravings, and material ignorance clinging to him from one lifetime to another. They will bother him in the astral world and in new earthly incarnations with continuous tendencies of restless distraction and compulsive sensory desires."

Moralists stress the outward giving-up of all sinful actions: "Don't be greedy! Don't be restless! Don't act witlessly against your own highest welfare!" Yet centuries of scriptural commandments, holy threats, and social persecution have been unable to impart to man true freedom from the activating impulses of satanic delusion. Someone once told me of a woman who, hoping to destroy her evil habit of stealing, followed literally the words of Jesus and cut off both her hands. Her physical act of maiming herself had no effect on the entrenched mental habit that made her a compulsive thief; soon she began to pilfer things with her toes and mouth!

How the science of yoga bestows victory over immoral impulses

In the Bhagavad Gita, the Lord declares: "The individual who forcibly controls the organs of action, but whose mind rotates around thoughts of sense objects, is said to be a hypocrite, deluding himself. But that man succeeds supremely who, disciplining the senses by the mind, unattached, keeps his organs of activity steadfast on the path of God-uniting actions (yoga)."* The scientific yoga method of self-control bestows on man the power to sever the strings that make his body, with all its sensory and motor parts, a puppet dancing to the tune of prenatal and postnatal habit-tendencies and material desires engendered by the Evil Force. "The man who physically fasts from sense objects finds that the sense objects fall away for a little while, leaving behind only the longing for them. But he who beholds the Supreme is freed even from longings."† Yoga, divine union with God, is the only sure way to overcome bondage to delusion. Jesus Christ and the masters of India taught that this freedom comes from controlling the life force flowing out to the senses and directing it inward to concentrate the consciousness in communion with the consummate bliss of God.

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* *God Talks With Arjuna: The Bhagavad Gita* III:6–7.

† *God Talks With Arjuna: The Bhagavad Gita* II:59.

3. Thus, to the yogi (any devotee who is striving scientifically to unite his soul with Spirit) Jesus' words intend the following message: "Meditation—withdrawing the mind from the senses and outer world—is the only way to attain the eternal happiness of divine contact. If while striving for that interiorized communion, the bodily sensations of physical discomfort or the sirens of tempting sensory thoughts try to invade the brain and distract the attention from its focus of attaining ecstatic union in the bliss of God-consciousness, then cut them off by disconnecting the attention from the sensory nerves—not unconsciously as during the state of sleep, but consciously by yoga techniques of mental concentration and *pranayama* (life-force control) by which body consciousness is transcended and God-union attained.

"When by deep meditation you become enwrapped in the ecstasy of God-communion, you realize that it is far better to have maimed yourself—to have silenced your physical self by detaching your consciousness from sensations of sight, hearing, taste, smell, and touch—in order to enter this inner kingdom of divine joy than to cast yourself out of God's kingdom by living only in the realm of sensory experiences. Having gained scientific self-control, you will have mastery over all evil impulses that would impel your hands and feet to do evil or your eye of ignorance to deceive you with delusive perceptions. The craving for physical indulgences, which keeps you burning with the hellfire of material desires and tormented by the worms of parasitic tendencies that entrench themselves in your consciousness and devour your peace, will be sublimated in Everlasting Bliss."

The orthodox notion of eternal hellfire and damnation is an utterly false precept; it arises not from God or His true prophets but from man's own unforgiving wrath against the evil actions of his brethren. It is nothing but satanic delusion that makes man ascribe to the all-loving God, who is equally the Father of all, a revengeful, vindictive spirit that creates hells and purgatories. As Jesus himself pointed out, the truth is that God in His Infinite Love is helping His children continuously to come back to His eternal kingdom of Bliss.*

The orthodox notion of eternal hellfire: an utterly false precept

"Hellfire" is self-created by the wrongs perpetuated by a man. Those who act evilly create evil tendencies that smolder unseen in the brain,

* Matthew 18:11–14. See pages 935–36.

ready to pour out fiery suffering at a suitable time. The word *hell* is from the Anglo-Saxon root *helan,* "to conceal." Therefore, the word *hellfire* is very appropriate to depict the concealed flames of agony which stored-up tendencies can produce in earthly life or in the afterlife in the astral world.* Just as an evildoer with any iota of rationality burns with evil conscience during wakefulness and with subconscious terror during sleep, so the consciousness of a man of evil conscience suffers from hellfire or agony in the "wakeful" state of human life, and after death suffers the effects of bad karma in the form of "fiery" nightmare-like experiences in the astral world. Physical misery ends with death; but spiritual misery born of ignorant actions continues in the after-death state and on into new physical incarnations, until by virtuous deeds and renunciation of evil that bad karma is expiated.

Thus Jesus goes on to say: "Every devotee by meditation must saturate, 'salt,' himself with the fire of realization, that he may be acceptable to God on earth and in the astral world. Everyone who makes a spiritual sacrifice of material indulgences for God-communion will find his soul 'salted' or saturated with divine realization. As salt bestows good flavour on food and also preserves it, so when the human consciousness is salted with divine realization it is saved from the delusion of decay and death and savours its native immortality. But if by concentrating on material pleasures and egotism the preservative flavour of the divine salt is lost, so also is lost all goodness it could impart in the seasoning of the soul.

Advice for aspirants experiencing temporary spiritual deterioration

"A true disciple is like good salt. He seasons his own life and the lives of others by his spirit of renunciation and his cultivation of divine qualities and realization. Just as unsavoury salt cannot be used for anything, so a disciple who loses the focus of his renunciation and his sense of self-discipline is useless to himself and to others, until he acquires the fresh salt of Self-realization by daily meditation and by absorbing through attentive good fellowship the divine peace of the Self-realization expressed by other God-seeking souls."

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* As cited earlier [see Discourse 27], the word used for *hell* in the original Greek of the Gospel is *Gehenna*—from Hebrew *Ge Hinnom,* the valley of Hinnom southwest of Jerusalem, used as a dump for the filth of the city, where continual fires were kept to consume it.

Further examination of the meaning of "hell" and "damnation" is found in Discourse 68.

In this passage, Jesus alludes to the temporarily diminished realization of some of his disciples brought about by their competitive desire for preeminence—a spiritual deterioration evidenced in their inability to heal the child possessed of an evil spirit.* Even highly advanced souls may be momentarily cast down from their lofty attainments by the strong habits and temptations of the ego. The devotee may have wondrous perceptions and realizations in meditation—as also the gift of spiritual powers—and yet suddenly, or by slow erosivity, be entrapped by some silently lurking egoic karmic tendency. Stability in the Changeless Spirit requires years—even incarnations—of moral and spiritual discipline and repeated experiences in the ecstasy of God-communion until the devotee's consciousness realizes no loss of God-perception and attunement during the fulfilment of his dutiful activities in the world. Thus Jesus advises the disciples that they would regain their full Self-realization by renunciation of egotistical desires and especially by meditation-bestowed power to free themselves at will from the ego's whimsical bondage to the attractions and repulsions of delusion.† Then with the newfound salt of Self-realization they could saturate their human consciousness with soul-immortality in Christ Consciousness.

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"Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 18:10).

"Take care that you do not disdain the simple, humble consciousness of children. Cosmic Vibration, which I feel within me, and the heavenly Cosmic Light, which I behold within me, reveal that the astral bodies of children, 'their angels,' who passed on from the earth with no free-will opportunity to acquire wisdom get a chance between incarnations with their simple unworldly consciousness to

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* See Discourse 47: "...they had disputed among themselves, who should be the greatest" (Mark 9:34). The incident in which the disciples could not heal the child possessed of an evil spirit is recounted in Discourse 46, Matthew 17:14–21.

† "Renunciation is difficult to achieve without God-uniting actions (yoga). By the practice of yoga, the *muni* ('he whose mind is absorbed in God') quickly attains the Infinite" (*God Talks With Arjuna: The Bhagavad Gita* v:6).

behold the materialised form of any being or saint in whose face shines the consciousness of God the Father."

The heavenly after-death experience of pure-hearted persons

"Angels" here refers to the astral bodies or luminous forms of nineteen elements in which souls with their past karmic patterns remain encased after death.* The "Father which is in heaven" signifies the presence of God in the transcendental realm behind the astral light and the finer causal light of wisdom. A person identified with his physical body and its material surroundings cannot see that the whole world is light and not matter, and thus cannot be conscious of the underlying presence of God. Saints who through meditation have awakened the superconsciousness can perceive the Heavenly Father hidden behind and transcendent within His dream vibrations of light and consciousness. Also blessed to glimpse the "face of my Father" are children with pure consciousness who die before becoming fully identified with the material body and the sensory consciousness with its ignorance-perpetuating karma.

God is often conceptualized as a Venerable Being in masculine form with a hoary beard, sitting on a grand throne in a point of space called heaven. It is mistakenly supposed that all good souls who reach this heavenly region see God as this benevolent Elder. "Face of my Father" does not signify that God has a body with distinctive physical features and countenance akin to man's form. Under no circumstances could God withdraw His omnipresence from infinity and remain confined within the limitations of one form; His cosmic body of universes would disintegrate without the sustaining presence of His conscious everywhereness. Thus God has never created a finite human-like form for Himself in which He invariably appears to souls in the astral heaven, or to saints in this world when they can penetrate their consciousness into His heavenly kingdom.†

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* See Discourse 21, pages 358 ff.

† "Can God Himself ever incarnate as a human being? To say that God can *not* do a certain thing is to limit Him. But there are so many things that God can do, yet does not do—at least not as human beings expect of Him. God has never been known to have taken a human form called 'God' and dwelt in it among men. ('Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is, God,' Jesus said, to distinguish himself, an avatar, from God the Father, the Absolute, the Formless.) The Lord has condescended many times, however, to manifest Himself through the incarnation of a fully liberated being who, once an ordinary human being, has become a true reflection or 'son of God.' God, who is almighty and can do anything, thus operates His Omni-

Nevertheless, just as cold can freeze invisible hydrogen-oxygen gas into an iceberg, so by the materialising power of God's will and the devotee's devotion the Heavenly Father who has materialised all forms out of His being can assume any form—that of Jesus, Krishna, or any other master or saint dear to His devotee; or that of an angelic deity-form such as Divine Father or Mother. The souls of children, ascending prematurely to an astral sphere, typically perceive the Heavenly Father as reflected in astral visions of angelic beings and in the forms of saints or masters. After being thus blessed by God's power, the souls of these little ones reincarnate on earth to continue to work out their karma to the ultimate end of joining the host of liberated souls who have returned to God. Young children, before their minds become saturated with material consciousness, often speak of their heavenly experiences and having seen God's angels.

> *"For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost. How think ye? If a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray? And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth more of that sheep, than of the ninety and nine which went not astray. Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish" (Matthew 18:11–14).**

66 Christ Consciousness appeared in my body named Jesus so that through my consciousness and teachings many souls who have lost themselves in the wilderness of the material desires of their earthly lives could be rescued and led back home to the Father.

"God has a multitude of virtuous souls on earth who remain within the fold of His sheltering presence; but when He sees that a soul, by the misuse of free will and succumbing to the influence of bad

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science through the human body of an avatar. Just as the ocean of Cosmic Consciousness is aware of a soul wave manifesting on its surface, so the soul wave of an avatar is aware of the ocean of Cosmic Consciousness manifesting through its form" (*God Talks With Arjuna: The Bhagavad Gita,* commentary on IV:7–8).

* Jesus uses the parable of the shepherd and lost sheep again in Luke 15:3–7. See Discourse 58 for additional commentary in that context.

company, has lost itself among the treacherous crags of egotism and the brambles of extreme body consciousness to the neglect of serious spiritual endeavour, God becomes much concerned for that soul. Owing to that person's previous good karma of having made some spiritual effort before going astray, God sends unto him some form of spiritual aid or a true guru to shepherd that wanderer back into His fold of divinely virtuous living.

God permits no soul to become forever lost in ignorance

"Even in the astral world after death, all 'little ones'—souls who are little in wisdom as well as souls of little children who have not worked out their karma on earth—receive the guidance of God's will to assist them out of their karmic miseries. By His divinely arranged help, God aids them to reincarnate in conditions conducive to resolving their karmic plight and which provide them with fresh opportunity to liberate their souls by wisdom and spiritual transformation in meditation. All souls belong to the fold of God; none is outside the attention and care of the Invisible Shepherd. When a soul becomes lost in ignorance, God does not permit that soul to perish; He is always watchful that the sinner somehow returns to the fold of the virtuous."

Man can go astray into an evil environment and behaviour for a while, but no amount of sin can change his eternal soul-nature of divinity. Sin is a crust of ignorance accrued during man's lost wanderings that hides the perfect soul; when by meditation the soul is led back to God, the crust is washed away and the perfection is revealed.

"Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican" (Matthew 18:15–17).

Jesus speaks not only of purifying one's own behaviour of offences, but of how a virtuous person should respond to one who commits offenses against him:

"If your brother in any way acts wrongly against you, take him aside and tell him his faults quietly. If he listens to you, then you have regained the good will and love of your brother. If you speak of the faults of your brother in public, you will rouse his ire and forfeit his trust in you, thus turning him into a permanent enemy; whereas, if you confer privately with him, he will know you intend no ridicule, but are trying with love to remove the cause of ill will.

"If he will not listen to you alone, then in the interest of truth take with you one or two or more trusted friends and with good intentions try to reform the mind-set of your brother. This will establish in the purview of witnesses your honest purpose. If your brother in wickedness persists in turning a deaf ear to you, then pray for him in the holy precincts of your place of worship and in the inner temple of your consciousness. Also bring his actions to notice before the elders of your religious congregation ('church'*) who may help to settle the differences between you and your brother. But if your brother spurns this advice also, then let him remain unto you a disbeliever in truth, a heathen and an outcast ('publican') before the tribunal of his own conscience."

In the above, Jesus emphasized the virtue of using the influence of one's own good intentions and those of honourable persons and religious teachers to awaken the sleeping conscience of any error-stricken brother, that he might reform. If he remains recalcitrant, at least the erroneous one would find himself convicted by his own conscience, stimulated by the loving entreaty and thoughts of the brother, good people, and religious teachers. When the wicked brother refuses to be awakened by any good method, it is better to let him alone with his conscience and the strict disciplinarian of the karmic consequences of his behaviour.

"Verily I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matthew 18:18).†

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* See Discourse 45, page 878 n. (Matthew 16:18) for explanation of translation of original Greek word *congregation* as "church" in the King James Bible. No "church" per se existed in the time of Jesus.

† These same words are ascribed to Jesus in another context in Matthew 16:19; see Discourse 45.

"By the testimony of Cosmic Vibration and truth within me, I declare unto you that whatever bad tendencies you create on earth will limit your earth life, and after death those tendencies will also limit your soul in the astral world. Whatever good tendencies you will loosen within your soul, the same vibration of your good tendencies will also expand the freedom and heavenly experiences of the soul after death in the astral world. This is the law of karma, cause and effect, whose judgment of souls holds true on earth and in the astral world.

"Evil actions performed on earth will be carried within the consciousness into the astral world and thereafter into the next incarnation in an environment apropos to evil consequences. Earthly good qualities carried into the astral world after death bring the opportunity of reincarnation in a good earthly environment. Good actions done on earth ultimately free the soul to be with God in the hereafter."

"Again I say unto you, that if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matthew 18:19–20).

"Again I declare unto you, if two of you shall unite your concentration, 'agree,' and very deeply pray for the realization of any wholesome desire, your Father in heaven will know of it and by His Will shall grant your wish on earth. But your united concentration must be strong and continuous to reach that level of the Father's presence that brings from Him a conscious direct response in fulfilling your good wish. Wherever two or three devotees gather together 'in my name,' listen in meditation to the Cosmic Vibration within them, there in that vibration they shall feel my Christ Consciousness."

"Where two or three are gathered in my name": the power of united concentration

When Jesus said, "If two of you shall agree," he emphasized that when one's human will is reinforced by the will of another, it becomes stronger. When the strong will of two or more people is united in deep meditation on God, their will becomes charged with the all-powerful, all-accomplishing Divine Will.

Man's will is the activating faculty of consciousness that makes him a vital, thinking, creative, accomplishing being. Every soul is a child of God and a reflection of God's omnipotent will, but by egoity man isolates his will from the Divine Will and thus limits it. But when a devotee reinforces his will by deep concentration and union with the strong will of other devotees he transforms his will into God's will, recollecting his identity with God and thus recovering his divine heritage, possessing the illimitable material or spiritual power of his Heavenly Father. The devotee ought not to expect the full realization of the power of his will and prayer until he has strengthened them by divine company and God-contact.

When Jesus said, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I," he stressed the power of united concentration: When two or a few devotees come together for inner worship of God, the stronger divine concentration of one person strengthens the weaker concentration of another. But if such gatherings are merely a cause for discussion and gossip, halfhearted recitation of prayers, or absentminded rituals, with no real inner communing with God, it is unlikely that the Divine Guest of Honour will be felt in their midst. Jesus' exhortation was a call for sincere devotees to unite the depths of their meditation in hearing "my name," Cosmic Vibratory Sound, *Aum,* announcing that "there am I," Christ Consciousness, "in the midst of them." In the Cosmic Vibration they will feel the Christ Intelligence become manifest within their own uplifted consciousness.

Saint John in the Book of Revelation said: "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice as of a trumpet."* The "voice as of a trumpet" signifies the great cosmic sound of *Aum,* which the devotee hears in meditation as he approaches Spirit. The "Lord's day" signifies the occasion when the Christ Consciousness, Lord of all vibratory creation, dawns upon the consciousness of the devotee in deep meditation.

The modern ideal of worship consisting of vast congregations with heterogeneous minds has changed the temple of God into a lecture hall. The huge assemblages with their restless thoughts want to be entertained by the charisma and intellectual expositions of an eloquent minister. While the inspiration imparted by congregational worship has its place, there need to be also small groups of souls who

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* Revelation 1:10.

gather together in quiet places to unite their will in meditation and in listening to the Cosmic Sound of the Holy Ghost vibrating behind the throbs of the heart, awakening their intuitive perception of the universal consciousness of Christ. Instead of being held together in vast congregations by music and the personality of a religious elocutionist, a few earnest seekers who gather together to meditate deeply and commune with the voice of God within, feeling themselves in the presence of Christ Consciousness, will be divinely bound together in God by their own Self-realization.

DISCOURSE 49

"Follow Me": Further Counsel From Jesus on Inner and Outer Renunciation

All Who Are in Tune With Christ Consciousness Work in Harmony

❖

A Warning About Using Spiritual Power for Ignoble Purposes

❖

God Uses Love, Not Force, to Reform Evildoers

❖

Jesus Felt the Universe as His Body and Omnipresence as His Home

❖

India's Ideal of Complete Renunciation Exemplified in the Life of Jesus

❖

Duty to God Should Take Precedence Over Attachment to Family

❖

The Psychology of Inner and Outer Renunciation

"All devotees, householder or renunciant, must realize that mental renunciation is of primary importance in the attainment of God....The path of yoga teaches every aspiring devotee to commune with God while living in the world or as a renunciant."

And John answered and said, "Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name; and we forbad him, because he followeth not with us."

And Jesus said unto him, "Forbid him not: for he that is not against us is for us."

And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem, and sent messengers before his face: and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him. And they did not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem.

And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, "Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elijah did?"

But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them." And they went to another village.

And it came to pass, that, as they went in the way, a certain man said unto him, "Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest."

And Jesus said unto him, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head."

And he said unto another, "Follow me."

But he said, "Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father."

Jesus said unto him, "Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God."

And another also said, "Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house."

And Jesus said unto him, "No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."

—Luke 9:49–62

DISCOURSE 49

"Follow Me": Further Counsel From Jesus on Inner and Outer Renunciation

And John answered and said, "Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name; and we forbad him, because he followeth not with us."

And Jesus said unto him, "Forbid him not: for he that is not against us is for us" (Luke 9:49–50).

Parallel reference:

And John answered him, saying, "Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and he followeth not us; and we forbad him, because he followeth not us."

But Jesus said, "Forbid him not: for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me. For he that is not against us is on our part. For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in my name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward" (Mark 9:38–41).

"Beloved disciples, do not reprobate any man who is working healings in my name—through the power of Cosmic Vibration emanating from Christ Consciousness—just because he does not otherwise associate himself with us. It does not matter whether or not

he outwardly follows us; as long as he is in tune with the Christ Consciousness, he is one with me and with all of us and is justified in administering divine healings to stricken children of God. The law of divine healing by the Christ Consciousness–imbued cosmic vibratory power is universal and not subject to the exclusive control of anyone.

All who are in tune with Christ Consciousness work in harmony

"Whosoever performs miraculous healings through Christ Consciousness will not in any way speak against me, in whom the Christ Consciousness is fully manifested. If he does not practice anything against our principles, then he is in truth in tune with us.

"Whosoever shall perform any service in the spirit of Christ Consciousness will not lack a reward therefrom. If he helps you even with a cup of water when you are thirsty, he will gain from that act because of the responding Christ Consciousness manifested in you—as also present in the consciousness of all. Those who act in sympathy with you tune in with the Christ Consciousness present in you and will be rewarded by expansion of their consciousness, automatically attracting unto themselves through that attunement the qualities of Christ Consciousness."

Truth, like God, is one. Those who have attained real knowledge of truth through the actual experience of intuitive realization do not in essence contradict one another. However, because God-realized souls express wisdom in various modes as appropriate for their clime and time and the purpose of their mission, disciples of limited understanding lose sight of the underlying unity of truth and emphasize the superficial differences. Hence the multiplicity of religions and sects within those religions, each intent on invalidating other paths. How necessary it is that "my way is the only way" religionists concentrate on acquiring Self-realization, that by the incontrovertible perception of God and truth the walls of divisiveness and intolerance are thrown down to accommodate the all-inclusive One Truth, which seeks a home in the shrines of every faith.

And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem, and sent messengers before his face: and they went, and entered into a vil-

lage of the Samaritans, to make ready for him. And they did not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem.

And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, "Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elijah did?"

But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them." And they went to another village (Luke 9:51–56).

66 You are behaving as though you are not aware of the divine image in which you are made. Otherwise you would feel no spirit of revenge when ill-treated, for it is not your soul nature but the Evil Force that incites satanic emotions. The Christ Consciousness is manifest in my body (the Son of man), and potentially in yours, not to destroy the lives of those who do evil but to redeem them from bondage to death and delusion by the superior power of divine ways."

A warning about using spiritual power for ignoble purposes

Jesus earlier had warned his disciples to refrain from wrongly or vengefully using the tremendous power bestowed on them with the spiritual awakening of inner divine forces.* Here again he reminds them to discriminate constantly as to whether their motivations are from attributes native to the soul or from satanic tendencies that gained entry into the consciousness through the channel of ignorance. He wanted the disciples to realize that to please God they must bring out by good actions the Father's quintessential goodness in their souls. Too often is the Divine Presence in man eclipsed by Satan-implanted incitements to anger, jealousy, revenge, destruction—Evil's host of influences that should be destroyed and expelled from one's being.†

Jesus came to expand human lives into the consciousness of eternal life in God, not to destroy into the oblivion of death those lives

* "Be ye therefore wise as serpents and harmless as doves" (Matthew 10:16). See commentary in Discourse 41.

† "He is truly a yogi who, on this earth and up to the very time of death, is able to master every impulse of desire and wrath. He is a happy man!...Renunciants who are desireless and wrathless, mind-controlled, and Self-realized, are completely free both in this world and in the beyond" (*God Talks With Arjuna: The Bhagavad Gita* v:23, 26).

fraught with evil. To succumb to temptation to use divine force for revenge, or for any selfish purpose, is to become Satan's instrument. When Jesus was arrested by his enemies to bring him before the high priest Caiaphas, he said: "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and He shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?"* With the forces of heaven at his command, emanating power through his spiritual eye, Jesus could have annihilated his enemies. Instead, he forgave them. By that act, his life became a channel of God's light for all ages to come.

To respond to hate with more hate, to fight evil with more evil, is to support the strength of the Evil Force. The power of Satan can be conquered solely by the good force of God. It is a common human blunder to resist anger with anger. The annals of history are rife with wars fought to suppress evil people by fire and sword; but the use of force alone is not lastingly effectual. Their bodies may be conquered by destructive means, but the evil and anger in their hearts will seethe and unless healed will grow stronger, in time finding new outlets for that pent-up hostility. People can be restricted but not wholly controlled by force. The ultimate influential power is God's love given through a genuine heart. Only love can truly destroy enmity in malevolent persons. The vibrations of divine love are a silent force that subtly works palliative transformations.

When one steadfastly refuses to give a slap for a slap, allowing animosity no foothold in one's being, a tremendous power of love develops in the heart. That love and its attendant forgiveness is the first budding of the bliss of God, without which there is no soul freedom. So long as spiritual power is sought or used to control or harm other people, that abuser of power will never find liberation.

God uses love, not force, to reform evildoers

One who would know God must behave like Him. No matter how evil a person is or how much he acts against divine laws, God never uses His omnipotence to destroy the malefactor. The evil person destroys himself by the consequences of his own sins. Though millions of persons pander to their evil inclinations, we do not see them dramatically punished by bolts of power sent from heaven; God prefers to reform them by love and wisdom, whispered to them through their conscience. He does not interfere with

* Matthew 26:53–54 (see Discourse 73).

man's free will to choose between good and evil by forcibly stopping evil actions. For those who are slow to learn from God's inner whispers, there is nevertheless the snail-paced evolutionary unfolding of inner wisdom through the time-honoured process of incarnations of trial and error, action and reaction—often painful but always with the underlying magnetic pull of God's love.

God is love. His silent loving call eventually draws every wrongdoer back to the Divine Home. He tries to hasten the awakening of His error-stricken children through the influence of the humble forgiving personalities of His true saints and devotees. Christlike souls who commune with God have distinctly declared, by precept and by example, that anyone who aspires to know Him must learn to demonstrate the godliness of conquering evil by good, hate by love, revengeful actions by the loving forgiveness of helpful actions, unkindness by kindly thoughtfulness, harshness by graciousness, pride by humbleness, cruelty by kindness, unrighteousness by righteousness, falsehood by truth, jealousy by love, temptation by self-control and meditation, restlessness by calmness, harsh speech by considerate words, evil behaviour by exemplary conduct, selfishness by openhearted selflessness, theological arrogance by Self-realization.

Christlike souls use their divine power like the Heavenly Father, only to win, never to harm, God's erroneous children. Darkness can be dispelled only by light. Sin can be dispelled only by righteousness, nurtured by forgiveness and love, which heals the wounds, the ignorance, and the rage in errant hearts. Jesus set a wondrous example of grand, humble, almighty godliness to light man's way out of darkness.

And it came to pass, that, as they went in the way, a certain man said unto him, "Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest."

*And Jesus said unto him, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head" (Luke 9:57–58).**

* Cf. parallel reference in Matthew 8:19–20.

Jesus was not sorrowing over any sense of lack or bemoaning his itinerant life. All great masters who are one with Spirit feel the Infinite as their sole consciousness, pervading the whole physical cosmos in which their human forms are included. To Jesus, the universe was his body and wall-less omnipresence his home. He did not care to identify himself with a little physical form or to house it in one fixed point of space with mundane collectibles; everywhereness was his abode, everything a part of his overarching Christ Consciousness:

Jesus felt the universe as his body and omnipresence as his home

"Instinct teaches the foxes to live in holes and birds of the air to make their dwelling in nests; but the Christ Consciousness present in my body (the Son of man), being omnipresent, confines itself to no particular point of space wherein to rest the wisdom (head) present within it."

As the animals are at home in their dens, and birds in their nests, so the man of limited consciousness restricts his thought of home to a particular place. The liberated man, on the other hand, no longer feels stranger or alien to any place in the cosmos or beyond.

The Persian seer Omar Khayyam wrote of the liberated soul's unfettered being in his acclaimed *Rubaiyat*. In the bliss of oneness with God (the eternally unchanging "Moon of Delight"), the poet exults:

> Ah, Moon of my Delight, who know'st no wane,
> The Moon of Heav'n is rising once again:
> How oft hereafter rising shall she look
> Through this same Garden after me—in vain!*

"The little garden of the outward universe can no longer accommodate my being, spacious with omnipresence. Moon of heaven, sun, stars, all natural manifestations, ever bound by the rising and falling alternations of duality, look for me no more within the confines of a transient cosmos. I am one with transcendent Spirit."

Jesus expressed this absolute freedom to the scribe who vowed to follow him "whithersoever thou goest": "My home is the measureless infinitude of my Father's consciousness. Follow me there, you who would be my disciple!"

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* *The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam,* quatrain LXXIV, translated by Edward FitzGerald. Paramahansa Yogananda's revelatory spiritual interpretation of this poetic classic, *Wine of the Mystic,* is published by Yogoda Satsanga Society of India.

Jesus' words also addressed his lifestyle of complete renunciation, akin to the ancient tradition in India of wandering mendicants. In accord with the tenets of these monastic renunciant orders that have existed continuously in India since ancient times, Jesus considered no dwelling place as his home and amassed no money for food or clothing; he did not marry or acknowledge his earthly relatives as his sole family. He required of his apostles, also, the strict life of renunciation: "And commanded them that they should take nothing for their journey, save a staff only; no scrip, no bread, no money in their purse: but be shod with sandals; and not put on two coats" (Mark 6:8–9; see Discourse 40). "Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:33; see Discourse 58). "Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Luke 12:33–34; see Discourse 56). The corollary of outer renunciation is the nonattachment of inner renunciation: "Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on" (Matthew 6:25; see Discourse 29). That is, consider your body a part of God and do not emphasize the material consciousness in it; spiritualize it by tuning your consciousness with God-consciousness, and you will realize that your life is sustained directly by your Creator.

India's ideal of complete renunciation exemplified in the life of Jesus

A God-surrendered, God-supported life has been extolled by some of India's greatest prophets, including Lord Buddha, Swami Shankara, and Sri Chaitanya. Initiates of the Swami Order, reorganised by Swami Shankara, and of the Buddhistic monastic order (predating the Christian era), follow the above-mentioned tenets of renunciation.*

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*In *The Vision of God* (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1932), Dr. Kenneth E. Kirk, Anglican bishop of Oxford, points out that Jesus' ideals of renunciation were not derived from traditional Jewish teachings: "The ascetic outlook of the Gospels is seen to stand out of any recognisable relation with contemporary Judaism. The passages about turning the other cheek, about taking no thought for the morrow, about laying up no treasure on earth, about forsaking parents and possessions, about bearing the Cross are foreign to the genius of the [Jewish] race." Though Bishop Kirk concludes that the historical origins of these teachings are something of a mystery, other historians relate them to evidence of Jesus' link with India. The distinguished scholar (and former president of India) Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan writes in *Eastern Religions and Western Thought* (Oxford University Press, 1939): "In his teaching of the Kingdom of God, life eternal, as-

People in the West tend to forget that the Bible is an Oriental scripture and that Jesus was an Oriental. He is, therefore, in many ways, more understood in the Orient than in the Occident, where the Christian scriptures are generally interpreted with ample accommodation for a lifestyle that is spiritually less demanding. Jesus lived the life of a renunciant and celibate, but the West little cares to follow that. They take from his teachings as much as they can adapt without inconveniencing their mode of living. Some Catholic monastics and a few others in the West do live the single-hearted renunciant life enjoined by Christ (becoming sainted examples); but in the East this ideal has been emphasized both in the material and the spiritual life.

In the West and in the East there are those who have exemplified the requisite inner spirit of renunciation in secular life as well as in the hermitages. Bhagavan Krishna, a godly king to whom are ascribed the sublime yoga teachings of the Bhagavad Gita, emphasized how to live in the world without being attached.* King Janaka, a ruler in ancient India who was an illumined saint of perfect inner renunciation, also demonstrated this ideal. In the modern era, the life of Lahiri Mahasaya offered the same example.

Swami Shankara extolled wisdom and renunciation; Jesus emphasized devotion and renunciation. Jesus, like Shankara, was a *sannyasi,* follower of the path of complete outer and inner renunciation. The Sanskrit word *sannyas,* from roots meaning "to cast aside," denotes one who divests himself of all encumbrances of identification with a limited body, mind, and ego, acknowledging no other self but Spirit. Jesus, who had expanded his love beyond the exclusivity of family ties and attachments, said: "Who is my mother? and who are my brethren?" Shankara similarly expressed his transcendent freedom: "No birth, no death, no caste have I. Father, mother, have I none." The great swami went on to say: "Mind, nor intellect, nor ego, *chitta;* sky, nor earth, nor metals am I. I am He, I am He; blessed Spirit, I am He."† Jesus likewise averred: "I and my Father are One."

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cetic emphasis, and even future life, Jesus Christ breaks away from the Jewish tradition and approximates to Hindu and Buddhist thought. Though his teaching is historically continuous with Judaism, it did not develop from it in its essentials." *(Publisher's Note)*

* The paths of outer renunciation and yogic inner renunciation are explained on pages 955 ff., and in Discourse 40.

† The words of Swami Shankara quoted here were set to music by Paramahansa Yogananda in his *Words of Cosmic Chants* (published by Yogoda Satsanga Society of India).

A follower of the monastic renunciant life forsakes his family name. The family name is indicative of the nation and particular family to which a person belongs; but members of monastic orders are invested with new names indicating their aspiration to achieve identity with God, or to manifest one of His holy qualities, or to emulate one of His saints. The name "Yogananda" is derived from *yoga,* meaning divine union, and *ananda,* meaning bliss. "Bliss through divine union" —he who is united with the bliss of Spirit. The original family name was forsaken when I took the sacred vows of *sannyas* from my Guru and received from him this new designation as a member of the ancient Swami Order.

Some swamis adopt the practice of nonattachment by constantly moving from one place to another, never remaining for more than three days in one dwelling, in order to observe the truth that since God is everywhere, every place is their home in Him. Even when swamis live in monasteries or hermitages, they are enjoined to keep their consciousness free of personal attachment, caring for the sacred precincts as a place consecrated to seeking and serving God, and remembering the Spirit as their real Home and Refuge.

A devotee who localizes his consciousness to one body or dwelling place loses sight of the omnipresent Spirit within him. Attachment to one's body and locale humiliates the soul with rude limitations. The yogi is the paradigm of renunciant wanderers. His peregrinations are in the infinitude of Spirit. He closes his eyes and consciousness to mortal perimeters and meditates on the uncircumscribed eternal sphere of Spirit—above, beneath, and all around him; his soul in ecstatic joy reclaims its forgotten identity with the One who is all-pervading. "Heaven is My throne, and earth is My footstool: what house will ye build Me? saith the Lord: or what is the place of My rest? Hath not My hand made all these things?"*

To devotees following the path of complete outward as well as inward renunciation, as did Jesus, he said: "Every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life" (Matthew 19:29).† One who gives up his limited consciousness of home and I-me-mine identity receives

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* Acts 7:49–50.

† See Discourse 63.

God's infinite kingdom and all treasures of creation as his portion. The universe is his home, the whole human family is his family, and Spirit is his Father-Mother-Friend-Beloved God.

And he said unto another, "Follow me."
But he said, "Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father."
*Jesus said unto him, "Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:59–60).**

"Follow my living spirit and everlasting-life-giving teachings and let the spiritually dead take care of the burial rituals of your physically dead father. As my disciple, you acknowledge God as your Father and that your first duty is to Him and to His work of bringing souls to His kingdom; let this not be superseded by social or family expectations."

Jesus had elsewhere quoted the divine injunction: "Honour thy father and mother" (Matthew 15:4); he was not here advocating that a son disrespect his father. Jesus said to his disciple, "Let the dead bury their dead," only to change in the disciple's consciousness his priorities as regards his family relation and his divine relation with Jesus in which he assumed a greater obligation to serve the spiritual needs of the expanded cosmic family of Christ. The master was reminding the disciple that it was more important to answer the call to God-realization by being in tune with Christ Consciousness than to tarry in the delusion-imposed sense of obligation to tend to the burial of the father. There were so many spiritually dead people bound to mortal traditions, heedless of a higher call to God, who were ready and capable of doing the necessary for a no longer useful dead body.

Duty to God should take precedence over attachment to family

In India it is the custom for the son to cremate his father or mother. He is the first one to put the fire in the funeral pyre. But a swami, who renounces ties to his personal family and becomes identified with God's universal family, is enjoined to forswear this obligation as regards any of his deceased relatives. Since in this cosmic motion picture of the world drama he no longer cabins himself in only one family unit, and since in his consciousness he belongs to God's family and does not of-

* Cf. parallel reference in Matthew 8:21–22.

ficiate at the death of all members of that family, why should he single out the dead of the family into which his body was born?

Spiritually, it is not a sin for a swami to perform the last rites for his relatives; even the founder of the Swami Order, Swami Shankara, overstepped the letter of the rule of his order and cremated the body of his mother. Because there was no one else to perform that duty, it is said that Swami Shankara came and produced divine fire to consume his mother's earthly form. The injunction serves not to prohibit a swami from doing the necessary for any of his deceased relatives if there is no one else to do so, but is a reminder not to identify himself exclusively with the family in which he was born nor to feel obligated to follow its traditions, having altered his consciousness from belonging to a singular family to become a member of the universal family, of which his birth family is but a part.

A first step in expanding one's love begins in one's home in loving one's family, growing from purely self-interest to caring for family members. Renunciants go beyond that circumscription of spousal and familial caring to love and serve their expanded family. This is a higher ideal of life in that spiritual nurture by sincerely dedicated saintly souls works permanent beneficial changes in individuals and the world community that cannot be wrought by mundane measures alone.

This is the principle Jesus was teaching his disciple, the reason to consider God first and to spend the precious moments of one's life in God-contact, rather than allocating to God and meditation a secondary place. It was not the burying of the disciple's dead father that Jesus reprehended, but the flawed attitude with which that devotee could so casually set aside a divine summons to satisfy a mortal attachment. Jesus sought to stir in that dulled consciousness the understanding that the Heavenly Father is the giver of the earthly father, and to Him should be given at all times supreme honour and attention.

The call of Jesus to the disciple to take up a higher cause was an assurance to the disciple that by following him, who held the keys to the mysteries of life and death, the disciple could do greater service to the soul of his dead father by his spiritual good will and devotion to God than he could by merely officiating at the burial of his father's physical frame. It is said in the scriptures of India that the sanctified life of one who is single-heartedly seeking God will automatically spiritually bless seven generations of that devotee's family—a far greater and lasting bequest than any material offering.

In his perceptive play on words, Jesus emphasized with incisive wit an important truth: Not only are the physically deceased dead, but the spiritually dead are dead also, and do not even know it. He was pointing out that the spiritually dead were more to be pitied than the physically dead; for the physically dead, having lost their earthly lives, could not awaken themselves to the truth-teachings of Christ, but the spiritually dead could hardly be pardoned for deliberately making themselves insentient to the life-giving, emancipating message brought to them by Jesus.

The physically living may be spiritually dead

When one is conscious of God he is really living. Until this awakening, the body is a tomb in which the soul is encased, as if dead and buried and awaiting resurrection. To be alive with life everlasting—that is the life that Jesus taught. How many, then, can be said to live even one year during their span on earth? If we posit a lifetime of sixty years, it is safe to assume that, on average, about thirty years are spent in sleeping, eating, and pursuing the comforts of the body. Another fifteen years are consumed in working, to keep the wolf from the door. Of the fifteen remaining years, it is not unusual for people to waste two-thirds of that time in unproductive socializing and entertainments, and in gossiping about others and putting their finger in somebody else's pie. Only five years out of a lifetime may be left; how many people use them to think of God? Perhaps a few minutes at night are spared to parrot the Lord's Prayer, or to ask for some needed blessing, or to perform some brief ritual of worship, while the mind is longing to go to bed, wanting to get this requisite moment of devotion over with as quickly as possible. "Please, Lord, take care of me and my loved ones, but now I want to sleep." Thus the time spent with God, the time spent really living, is practically nil. Yet people expect to enter the everlasting life of the kingdom of God!

Those also who have lost their ambition in life, their will to change and improve themselves and their surroundings, are the walking dead. Whenever one's will is lethargic, that person is not fully alive. It is will that draws fresh supplies of cosmic energy into the body. The self-satisfied inertia-bound worldly masses are those of whom Jesus said, "Let the dead bury their dead"; while to the spiritually willing he extended the promise of eternal life.

The would-be disciple in these verses was inspired by his contact with the consciousness of the living God that Jesus was manifesting.

Therefore Jesus perceived that it was a spiritually auspicious time for the man to realize that his foremost duty was to respond to that inner divine urge lest he risk losing his zeal for God-consciousness—hard-won by good karma and easily lost in the company and influence of worldly vibrations. Jesus knew the importance to all spiritual aspirants of associating with persons who are vibrantly alive with wisdom and God-contact. Thus his words signified: "Enliven yourself in the consciousness of the ever-living presence of God within you. Gain that realization, then share your divine joy with others by telling them—by your example and your words—of the kingdom of everlasting Bliss that you feel within you."

> *And another also said, "Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house."*
>
> *And Jesus said unto him, "No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:61–62).*

Here Jesus chides the irresolute devotee, the spiritual aspirant who outwardly renounces a material environment in order to plough his consciousness with discipline and wisdom, but who looks backward with attachment and longing for his forsaken worldly comforts, pleasures, and companionships. Without the inward renunciation of mortal limitations, the devotee is unable to concentrate on the attainment of the vast kingdom of Cosmic Consciousness.

In the above words, Jesus describes very clearly the strict path of the man of renunciation. Single-hearted devotees who are fit to embrace this path know that to renounce material entanglements for the attainment of God-consciousness is wise, because nothing can be enjoyed without the consciousness borrowed from God. At the call of death, everyone is compelled to leave everything instantaneously, often without notice. It is wiser, for those who are able, to leave everything voluntarily for a life devoted to the attainment of God, until God is realized. If He is paramount in the consciousness, the performance of material duties cannot produce misery. To take on worldly responsibilities with a spiritually untrained human

The psychology of inner and outer renunciation

consciousness is to be a victim of greed, anger, selfishness, disease, misery, worry, fear, and ignoble death. The exalted consciousness of saints justifies their having placed God first in their lives, for by attaining Him they know what it is to be really happy, spiritually and materially, no matter what material duties they perform.

In ancient times, there was adherence to the advice in the scriptures of India that children should leave their material home environment and live until young adulthood in the company of wise spiritual teachers. After receiving an education and thorough spiritual training they would return to the world to lead the lives of householders, ideal examples in society who had learned to govern their material lives by spiritual discipline, self-control, and divine happiness. Among these students, some chose to remain renunciants throughout life. Jesus himself lived by that ideal of renunciation, never marrying nor identifying himself with family ties and worldly ambitions. His parental attachment was to God and his kingdom was the boundless tracts of infinity.

Anyone who outwardly renounces material duties and aspirations and retires in solitude but inwardly keeps imagining the joys of a material environment and its offerings is a pretender and not fit to understand the importance of forsaking the transitory pleasures of a worldly life for the everlasting bliss of Spirit.

The psychology of renunciation consists in evicting from the mind confrontational material desires in order to create an inner temple of God-consciousness. Jesus pointed out, as did Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita, that a person should not presume divine attainment by outwardly renouncing material pleasures while inwardly nurturing a longing for them. Such a person does not receive the benefit of God-contact. Along with outward renunciation, there must be inward renunciation as well. When that is accomplished, the mind, free from the habits of sensory indulgences, begins to be established in the kingdom of bliss in meditation.

It is a psychological and metaphysical impossibility to be free from a bad habit by material renunciation alone. Evil habits are banished only when they are cast off from the domain of thought as well as actions. Since thought is the spring of action, thinking evil may be as dangerous as acting evil. All devotees, householder or renunciant, must realize that mental renunciation is of primary importance in the attainment of God. It is better to practise attaining inner renunciation in the world than, without preparation of purifying the heart to desire

God supremely, to run away from the world and remain brooding over forsaken earthly joys. By spiritual techniques of meditation, the path of yoga teaches every aspiring devotee to commune with God while living in the world or as a renunciant, precluding mere outward renunciation. Escapists are afraid to struggle for a living or to face life's challenges, so they renounce worldly life for the sustenance and security of an ashram or monastery. They are not true renunciants, but social parasites, depending for food on the earnings of hardworking worldly people. They become physically, mentally, and spiritually indolent, and never attain God-consciousness.

Only those who leave everything because they are inwardly impelled by the sincere love of God are justified in their renunciation. They are the select who have been called and chosen by God to seek and serve Him in unique selflessness. Such renunciants do not shrink from whatever tests or hardships assail them, or care whether they starve or die for the love of God. Their souls are in the holy company of great teachers who renounce the world to offer high spiritual service, as were the disciples of Jesus. In renouncing the lesser duties of a family life they embrace a higher duty to God's greater human family and a responsibility to make themselves "fit for the kingdom of God."

DISCOURSE 50

"Never Man Spake Like This Man"

Jesus Confounds His Critics in Jerusalem

A Divine Life Is Guided by God's Wisdom Received Through Intuition

❖

Jesus' Knowledge Came From Soul Contact With the Infinite Wisdom

❖

Jesus Incarnated as a Free Soul, Sent on Earth by the Will of God

❖

Christ Consciousness Lives in the Eternal Now

❖

"Rivers of Living Water": Ascent of Life Force and Consciousness Through the Spinal Centres

❖

Scientific Yoga Meditation Quenches Man's Spiritual Thirst

"Not understanding the inner meaning of the above sayings of Jesus, his critics began to conjecture....In so many ways, and in so much of his teaching, Jesus had to bear the contumely of uncomprehending minds."

After these things Jesus walked in Galilee: for he would not walk in Jewry, because the Jews sought to kill him. Now the Jew's feast of tabernacles was at hand. His brethren therefore said unto him, "Depart hence, and go into Judea, that thy disciples also may see the works that thou doest. For there is no man that doeth any thing in secret, and he himself seeketh to be known openly. If thou do these things, shew thyself to the world." For neither did his brethren believe in him.

Then Jesus said unto them, "My time is not yet come: but your time is alway ready. The world cannot hate you; but me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil. Go ye up unto this feast: I go not up yet unto this feast; for my time is not yet full come." When he had said these words unto them, he abode still in Galilee.

But when his brethren were gone up, then went he also up unto the feast, not openly, but as it were in secret. Then the Jews sought him at the feast, and said, "Where is he?" And there was much murmuring among the people concerning him: for some said, "He is a good man": others said, "Nay; but he deceiveth the people." Howbeit no man spake openly of him for fear of the Jews.

Now about the midst of the feast Jesus went up into the temple, and taught. And the Jews marvelled, saying, "How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?"

Jesus answered them, and said, "My doctrine is not mine, but His that sent me. If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself. He that speaketh of himself seeketh his own glory: but he that seeketh His glory that sent him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in him. Did not Moses give you the law, and yet none of you keepeth the law? Why go ye about to kill me?"

The people answered and said, "Thou hast a devil: who goeth about to kill thee?"

Jesus answered and said unto them, "I have done one work, and ye all marvel. Moses therefore gave unto you cir-

cumcision; (not because it is of Moses, but of the fathers;) and ye on the Sabbath day circumcise a man. If a man on the Sabbath day receive circumcision, that the law of Moses should not be broken; are ye angry at me, because I have made a man every whit whole on the Sabbath day? Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment."

Then said some of them of Jerusalem, "Is not this he, whom they seek to kill? But, lo, he speaketh boldly, and they say nothing unto him. Do the rulers know indeed that this is the very Christ? Howbeit we know this man whence he is: but when Christ cometh, no man knoweth whence he is."

Then cried Jesus in the temple as he taught, saying, "Ye both know me, and ye know whence I am: and I am not come of myself, but He that sent me is true, whom ye know not. But I know Him: for I am from Him, and He hath sent me."

Then they sought to take him: but no man laid hands on him, because his hour was not yet come. And many of the people believed on him, and said, "When Christ cometh, will he do more miracles than these which this man hath done?" The Pharisees heard that the people murmured such things concerning him; and the Pharisees and the chief priests sent officers to take him.

Then said Jesus unto them, "Yet a little while am I with you, and then I go unto Him that sent me. Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me: and where I am, thither ye cannot come."

Then said the Jews among themselves, "Whither will he go, that we shall not find him? Will he go unto the dispersed among the Gentiles, and teach the Gentiles? What manner of saying is this that he said, 'Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me: and where I am, thither ye cannot come'?"

In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should

receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)

Many of the people therefore, when they heard this saying, said, "Of a truth this is the Prophet." Others said, "This is the Christ." But some said, "Shall Christ come out of Galilee? Hath not the scripture said, that Christ cometh of the seed of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem, where David was?" So there was a division among the people because of him. And some of them would have taken him; but no man laid hands on him. Then came the officers to the chief priests and Pharisees; and they said unto them, "Why have ye not brought him?" The officers answered, "Never man spake like this man."

Then answered them the Pharisees, "Are ye also deceived? Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him? But this people who knoweth not the law are cursed." Nicodemus saith unto them, (he that came to Jesus by night, being one of them,) "Doth our law judge any man, before it hear him, and know what he doeth?" They answered and said unto him, "Art thou also of Galilee? Search, and look: for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet." And every man went unto his own house.

—John 7:1–53

DISCOURSE 50

"Never Man Spake Like This Man"

Jesus Confounds His Critics in Jerusalem

After these things Jesus walked in Galilee: for he would not walk in Jewry, because the Jews sought to kill him. Now the Jews' feast of tabernacles was at hand. His brethren therefore said unto him, "Depart hence, and go into Judea, that thy disciples also may see the works that thou doest. For there is no man that doeth any thing in secret, and he himself seeketh to be known openly. If thou do these things, shew thyself to the world." For neither did his brethren believe in him.*

Then Jesus said unto them, "My time is not yet come: but your time is alway ready. The world cannot hate you; but me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil. Go ye up unto this feast: I go not up yet unto this feast; for my time is not yet full come." When he had said these words unto them, he abode still in Galilee (John 7:1–9).

In addition to Jesus' inner circle of disciples, there were many curiosity-seekers—including some of his own relatives, "brethren"—who followed Jesus in expectation of seeing him perform extraordinary works, but who did not believe in his divine mission as

* I.e., Judea.

Messiah. The brethren sought to persuade him to go to the Jewish Feast of Tabernacles in Jerusalem and there proclaim himself by demonstrating before all, not just to believers, what mighty works he could do. If Jesus were who his followers claimed him to be, surely he should seek to be known openly. But Jesus could not be tempted to demonstrate his miracles like a salesman advertising material goods; on all occasions he acted with divine dignity and according to God's command. He meekly but wisely answered his disbelieving brothers that whatever he did, even when incomprehensible to coarsened mentalities, was consonant with divine guidance:

A divine life is guided by God's wisdom received through intuition

"All aspects of my life, the minute details of my plans and actions, are governed by the influence of the will of God on the free choices made by my will. The time when He will command me to go to the feast has not yet arrived. My actions are in accord with His wisdom; but you do whatever you please at any time, because you are guided by worldly desires and the instigations of your environment and habits. My time is precious and divinely planned; but your time is unimportant to you, and thus you are always ready to spend it indiscriminately according to the impulses and desires of the moment. The world will not criticize or bother you, because you are not interested in taking the responsibility of recognising and removing from yourselves the defects of worldly consciousness, or of pointing out to others the folly of a whim-led existence oblivious of the divine intent. But the world, pervaded by satanic ignorance and its acolytes of worldly persons, actively resists my mission 'because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil.' Nevertheless, I love the world and want it to be saved, so I mind not the penalty I shall pay for daring to expose its faults."

Persons who do not plan their lives according to divine wisdom lead a rudderless existence, swept hither and thither by the currents of delusion, uncertain of the destination and real purpose of their lives. Jesus was guided by the wisdom of his loving Father, whispered constantly to his awakened intuition. Through that intuition he was also able to discern the most auspicious time for his actions as determined by the cosmic law of cause and effect. Ordinary body-identified persons cannot apprehend how subtly the causes they initiate ordain the karmic outcome of their actions. Some persons even study astrology

to try to ascertain the influence of their karma as expressed through the medium of planets in an attempt to counteract evil influences by astrological foreknowledge. But masters go beyond the uncertain messages of the stars to the guidance of the Divine Wisdom that governs the laws that operate the stars and all human lives and their actions.

Happiness, success, and peace of mind accrue by striving in everything to attune oneself through meditation and prayer with God's will, the power that harmoniously interknits all life with the universal play of cosmic forces. The devotee subdues the domination of his wayward ego with its merciless misadventures and throughout the day offers all his actions unto God to please Him and to contribute to His divine plan.

But when his brethren were gone up, then went he also up unto the feast, not openly, but as it were in secret. Then the Jews sought him at the feast, and said, "Where is he?" And there was much murmuring among the people concerning him: for some said, "He is a good man": others said, "Nay; but he deceiveth the people." Howbeit no man spake openly of him for fear of the Jews.

Now about the midst of the feast Jesus went up into the temple, and taught. And the Jews marvelled, saying, "How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?"

Jesus answered them, and said, "My doctrine is not mine, but His that sent me. If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself. He that speaketh of himself seeketh his own glory: but he that seeketh His glory that sent him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in him. Did not Moses give you the law, and yet none of you keepeth the law? Why go ye about to kill me?"

The people answered and said, "Thou hast a devil: who goeth about to kill thee?" (John 7:10–20).

66 My discourses are not a contrived concoction of my intellect and imagination. Though expressed through me, my teachings are not mine 'but His that sent me.' My words, my mind, my intelligence, my intuition, my consciousness spread throughout creation, are all inspired by the consciousness of the Father through whose will

I am here on earth in order to declare His message. Any person who is in tune with God's will shall know that I am attuned with His will and that I preach the truth as desired by Him, not of myself or according to my own ideas born of ego consciousness."

Jesus' knowledge came from soul contact with the Infinite Wisdom

Jesus did not acquire his knowledge from pedantic traditions of ordinary or religious schooling. His wisdom was from the infinite scroll of God-consciousness, holy writ enshrined in his soul in previous incarnations.* He challenged his critics that if any one of them were to gain actual experience of God and attunement with His consciousness and will, that person would be qualified to judge his Gospel teachings—to "know of the doctrine, whether it be of God or whether I speak of myself."

Jesus emphasized that his entire life and works were to declare God, not himself: "He who teaches actuated by ego consciousness always seeks personal fame and glory. But he who feels the presence of Cosmic Consciousness behind his individualized consciousness seeks only to glorify and declare God as his Creator. He is a real prophet of the Lord who thus is loyal to Him. He who is true to God, having shunned the ego, and who feels God constantly, continuously demonstrating God's consciousness through his life, can never do anything that is not in harmony with divine righteousness."

Jesus went on to point out the irony of his being criticized by the hypocrites in the crowd who outwardly gave lip service to the laws set forth by Moses but inwardly harboured evil intentions: "Didn't Moses give you the law not to kill? How be it that you obey not that commandment, as is evidenced by your desire to kill me? I know this intent is in your mind, though you deny it and say I am deranged by a devil for so accusing you."

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Jesus answered and said unto them, "I have done one work, and ye all marvel. Moses therefore gave unto you circumcision; (not because it is of Moses, but of the fathers;) and ye on the Sabbath

* "To the knower of Brahman (Spirit), all the Vedas (scriptures) are of no more utility than is a reservoir when there is a flood from all directions" (*God Talks With Arjuna: The Bhagavad Gita* 11:46).

day circumcise a man. If a man on the Sabbath day receive circumcision, that the law of Moses should not be broken; are ye angry at me, because I have made a man every whit whole on the Sabbath day? Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment" (John 7:21–24).

Jesus, referring here to his having "done one work," meant the healing of the impotent man at the pool of Bethesda, on the Sabbath, which had provoked the murderous wrath of the authorities against him: "And therefore did the Jews persecute Jesus, and sought to slay him, because he had done these things on the Sabbath day."*

Though the Mosaic law forbade working on the Sabbath, circumcision was permitted on that day. Jesus points out the inconsistency of his critics in allowing the lesser purification symbolized by the rite of circumcision, while opposing the total physical and spiritual rejuvenation accomplished on the Sabbath by the Lord for the man who had "had an infirmity thirty and eight years."

"Judge not actions of others from a hasty, superficial standpoint, but judge wisely according to the righteousness of the motive behind them."

Then said some of them of Jerusalem, "Is not this he, whom they seek to kill? But, lo, he speaketh boldly, and they say nothing unto him. Do the rulers know indeed that this is the very Christ? Howbeit we know this man whence he is: but when Christ cometh, no man knoweth whence he is."

Then cried Jesus in the temple as he taught, saying, "Ye both know me, and ye know whence I am: and I am not come of myself, but He that sent me is true, whom ye know not. But I know Him: for I am from Him, and He hath sent me" (John 7:25–29).

Knowing that the Pharisees sought Jesus' life, the people wondered why he was openly teaching at the Feast of Tabernacles. Had the rulers become convinced that Jesus was the Messiah? Many wondered, but others, referring to some traditional

* John 5:1–18 (see Discourse 21).

belief that the family origin of the Messiah would be mysterious ("no man knoweth whence he is"), refused to believe in Jesus as Christ, since they were acquainted with the commonality of his family at Nazareth.

Jesus incarnated as a free soul, sent on earth by the will of God

Jesus' words signified: "You all know me as the son of Joseph and you know the place of my earthly home; but you do not know my true origin, the omnipresence of the Father. I did not come on earth in the way of ordinary mortals, compelled by reincarnation-making earthly desires or by the necessity to work out seeds of past karma. My desire to come on earth was to act as a message-bearer of my Father, having been chosen by Him to fulfil a divine mission.

"My Father is immanent in all space, even though your constricted consciousness does not feel Him in your life or understanding. But my Christ Consciousness is a reflection of the Cosmic Consciousness of my Father, therefore I know Him. The omnipresence of my universal consciousness comes from my realization of His Infinity."

Jesus was hinting to the people not to doubt that he was the Messiah based on their rationalizations about where he came from. However, when he said "I am from Him [God], and He hath sent me," he did not mean that he had been specially created as a perfect being who was then sent to earth by God. Through past lives his soul had made the remarkable journey of everyman, wending its way back to God. But long since, he had attained that high state of consciousness that had freed him and fitted him to serve as a divine incarnation, an emissary of the Infinite, a world saviour for many lost souls.

All beings originally were sent to the earth through the will of God. Those who do not realize this truth misuse their God-given free will to wander in a maze of mortal desires, reincarnating again and again as they thread their way in circuitous routes toward ever elusive fulfilment. But those who live a life guided by divine will and wisdom find the opening back to God after completing their God-given purpose on earth.*

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* "The *rishis* taught that each human being has been created by God as a soul that will uniquely manifest some special attribute of the Infinite before resuming its Absolute Identity."—*Autobiography of a Yogi*

Then they sought to take him: but no man laid hands on him, because his hour was not yet come. And many of the people believed on him, and said, "When Christ cometh, will he do more miracles than these which this man hath done?" The Pharisees heard that the people murmured such things concerning him; and the Pharisees and the chief priests sent officers to take him.

Then said Jesus unto them, "Yet a little while am I with you, and then I go unto Him that sent me. Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me: and where I am, thither ye cannot come."

Then said the Jews among themselves, "Whither will he go, that we shall not find him? Will he go unto the dispersed among the Gentiles, and teach the Gentiles? What manner of saying is this that he said, 'Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me: and where I am, thither ye cannot come'?" (John 7:30–36).

66 It is now only a little while that my body will be on earth with all of you. Then my soul, and the Christ Consciousness in it, will mingle in the Cosmic Consciousness from which it came. When I am gone, some of you will realize the importance of my life and will belatedly wish you had sought me out while I was easily accessible on earth, but it will be too late. I will have ascended to the abode of my Father in Cosmic Consciousness, where your worldly consciousness cannot reach. Even in the present moment, I feel my Christ Consciousness as the Eternal Now that your consciousness cannot comprehend, just as I will when my soul leaves the transient body after crucifixion and merges in Eternity. My Christ Consciousness is now and will ever remain the same, knowing the Eternal Now in which, though I am absent from the earth yet shall I be ever present. All this is beyond the grasp of your material consciousness, which through the stingy openings of delusive time and space sees only snippets of eternity."

Christ Consciousness lives in the Eternal Now

Jesus pointed out to the people the unique good fortune they had in him as an embodiment of Christ Consciousness. Ordinary people are ignorant of Christ Consciousness; but even in their ignorance the people in the time of Jesus had the opportunity to behold with their eyes and receive the blessing of that Infinite Reflected Intelligence of God manifested in the body of Jesus. Owing to their perversity, they did not utilize this grand moment to avail themselves of his direct

intercession. He said that many would awaken spiritually after he was gone and would seek him but not find him. They would have to uplift their consciousness to "where I am" in order to know him, for so long as they remained in worldly consciousness, "thither ye cannot come."

In these verses, Jesus speaks of the universal consciousness present in him as consciousness of the Eternal Now. In Spirit there is no past or future, only the everlasting Present. It is in the relativistic consciousness of persons under the influence of *maya* that Eternity appears separated into past, present, and future. God always is, and His immortal omniscience is not compartmentalized by the dimensional delusions of time and space; He beholds everything as happening in the infinitude of His Being *now.* Jesus expressed that consciousness by saying, "where I am," instead of "where I will be after the death of my mortal body"; and later when he said: "Before Abraham was, I am."*

Jesus knew that whether he was in the body or in the Spirit after crucifixion he would always feel the Eternal Now. This consciousness of the Eternal Presence, unreachable by ordinary mortals, is known to the advanced devotee who is able to feel the ever-existing nature of God. Past and future vanish from within him. He realizes he *is* forever, not that he *was* or *will be* existing forever. That is why Jesus said, "Where my consciousness is, experiencing the Eternal Now, that state your consciousness has not realized."

Not understanding the inner meaning of the above sayings of Jesus, his critics began to conjecture: "Where will he go that we may not be able to find him—perhaps to the Jews living in foreign

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* John 8:58 (see Discourse 51).

The Los Angeles Times on November 16, 1999, reported: "'The history of physics,' says Harvard physicist Andrew Strominger, 'is the history of giving up cherished ideas.' No idea has been harder to give up, however—for physicists and laypeople alike—than everyday notions of space and time, the fundamental 'where' and 'when' of the universe and everything in it....Now, some physicists are taking this revolutionary line of thinking....If their theories are right, in the words of Edward Witten of the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, space and time may be 'doomed.' Concurs physicist Nathan Seiberg, also of the institute: 'I am almost certain that space and time are illusions. These are primitive notions that will be replaced by something more sophisticated.' That conclusion may not affect anyone's morning commute. But it is rocking the foundations of physics—as well as causing metaphysical reverberations that inevitably follow major changes in our fundamental understanding of how the universe works." *(Publisher's Note)*

lands?"* In so many ways, and in so much of his teaching, Jesus had to bear the contumely of uncomprehending minds.

In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified) (John 7:37–39).

"Rivers of living water": ascent of life force and consciousness through the spinal centres

In this recondite passage, Jesus makes an evident reference to the yogic science of God-communion that was the esoteric core of his original teaching to his close disciples. This verse in the Gospel According to St. John plainly states that Jesus was speaking "of the Spirit"—that is, of the Holy Ghost vibration of Spirit realized when life force and consciousness ascend from body consciousness as "rivers of living water" through the spinal centres to God-consciousness. The meaning of this saying would be understood not by those who only believed emotionally or intellectually in Jesus but by those who would be in tune with his Christ Consciousness (through receiving the Holy Ghost Cosmic Vibration, which he would send to them "that believe on him" after his resurrection and ascendant glorification in Spirit).

Any devotee practising the science of meditation can satisfy the thirst of mortal desires, as India's great yogis have proved for millenniums, by inner renunciation and by reversing the outwardly flowing currents of consciousness and life energy and uniting those currents with the everlasting, ever new bliss of God. To the ordinary person the saying of Jesus, "He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water," may be only a meta-

* "The dispersed among the Gentiles": reference to the Jews who had been driven from their Palestinian homeland to live in other parts of the Hellenic world during the reign of the Greek rulers who succeeded Alexander the Great. ("Gentiles" in this verse is a translation of *Hellenon,* "Greeks.") Jesus' listeners assumed he was telling them he would go to foreign lands where they would not be able to find him.

phor for abstract conjecture, but literally meaningless. However, these words are very clear to the yogi who scientifically meditates to unite his consciousness with the Divine Source of consciousness.

As a mighty river that brings fertility to the plains has its source in the mountains high above, so the source of the river of consciousness is Cosmic Consciousness, Spirit, the ever-existing, ever-conscious, ever-new Bliss that transcends creation. Descending into creation—into every particle of thought, life energy, and matter constituting the causal, astral, and physical realms—Cosmic Consciousness is called Christ Consciousness (*Kutastha Chaitanya*). Flowing into the soul and pure mind of man, it is called superconsciousness. Carried on the current of life energy down through the subtle spinal centres (*chakras*), losing its divine awareness in body identification, it is called subconsciousness, operating the body-mechanism through the life energy in the physical brain, spine, and viscera. Descending further, out into the muscles and senses, the river of consciousness settles in the level of the ordinary waking state, enlivening the muscular and sensory activities of the body, and creating desires for and attachments to material experiences.

How far the river of consciousness in worldly persons has fallen from its pristine fount in Spirit! Mired in the brackish lowlands of physical consciousness, in the outflowing energy of the lower three *chakras* of the spine, man tries vainly to quench the thirst of desires from the wells of sensory experiences. But worldly pleasure is like salt water: Instead of quenching desire, it creates a greater thirst.

Jesus declared: "If any man is maddened with desires and has not found peace; if any man is thirsty for the kingdom of God-consciousness and everlasting bliss, let him tune his consciousness with the Christ Consciousness, as is manifest within me. Then, as the scripture has said, he will drink of the immortal waters of bliss whose source is the all-satisfying Spirit. Any person who will tune his consciousness with Christ Consciousness by attentive concentration and devotion will find that out of 'his belly'—the ganglia of nerves with their astral energy in the solar plexus and in the lumbar, sacral, and coccygeal regions in the spine—many rivers of light or life force, relaxed from the senses by meditation, will flow up through the spine, floating his consciousness through the spinal centres of consciousness to the nectar-bliss of Spirit in the brain, from which his thirst of desires of all incarnations will be quenched forever."

Scientific yoga meditation quenches man's spiritual thirst

The devotee who masters the technique of yoga meditation knows that when concentration becomes interiorized he finds his life force and attention withdrawn from the motor nerves, sensory nerves, and heart and accumulated in the subtle astral centre in the coccygeal region of the spine. Then during deep meditation this accumulated life force floats his consciousness upward through the subtle sacral, lumbar, dorsal, cervical, and medullary centres to the highest centre of divine perception, the abode of Spirit in the thousand-petalled lotus of light and consciousness in the brain.

The downward-flowing astral life energy and consciousness in the three lower *chakras* (the lumbar, sacral, and coccygeal) feed the spine, brain, and organs of the physical body with sensory and motor powers, which under the influence of delusion promote worldly consciousness. The yogi devotee in deep meditation spiritualizes his consciousness and life force and reverses their downward trend to flow upward in the form of luminous rivers of light from the coccygeal, sacral, and lumbar regions (collectively, "the belly"), to the ocean of light of Spirit in the brain. The devotee sees his wondrous self coursing with these luminous rivers of life forces and consciousness ascending from the dark sensory regions to the effulgent bliss of Spirit.

Simply stated, the consciousness flowing with the life force through the senses of sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch makes man conscious of matter. But by meditation when consciousness and life force are withdrawn from the five senses, the astral nature of the life force, along with the consciousness and many other aroused divine forces in the spinal centres, look like rivers of light flowing upward toward the ocean of light of Spirit in the brain.

Earlier Jesus had said: "But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." And: "I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst."* In the present verses, Jesus makes clear that the way man can find that satisfaction of his soul thirst and hunger is to control the outgoing river of life and consciousness to free himself from bondage to mortal ignorance and sensory desires.

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*John 4:14 (Discourse 17) and John 6:35 (Discourse 43).

"He is full with contentment who absorbs all desires within, as the brimful ocean remains unmoved by waters entering into it—not he who lusts after desires."* Though most persons are unaware of the scientific way to reverse the flow of consciousness back toward Spirit, unconsciously they accomplish this to a limited degree each night in sleep, when the life force in the body withdraws from the muscles and senses in the deep dreamless state and the consciousness is transported from the material realm to the land where the soul feels the ever calm Spirit. One realizes he is made in the peaceful, joyous image of God after reversing the outward flow of consciousness from the body to the soul. Yogis can do that at will; and Jesus Christ was one of the greatest yogis who ever lived, demonstrating his God-union and mastery of the principles of life and consciousness.

Many of the people therefore, when they heard this saying, said, "Of a truth this is the Prophet." Others said, "This is the Christ." But some said, "Shall Christ come out of Galilee? Hath not the scripture said, that Christ cometh of the seed of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem, where David was?" So there was a division among the people because of him. And some of them would have taken him; but no man laid hands on him. Then came the officers to the chief priests and Pharisees; and they said unto them, "Why have ye not brought him?" The officers answered, "Never man spake like this man."

Then answered them the Pharisees, "Are ye also deceived? Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him? But this people who knoweth not the law are cursed." Nicodemus saith unto them, (he that came to Jesus by night, being one of them,) "Doth our law judge any man, before it hear him, and know what he doeth?" They answered and said unto him, "Art thou also of Galilee? Search, and look: for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet." And every man went unto his own house (John 7:40–53).

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* *God Talks With Arjuna: The Bhagavad Gita* 11:70.

That Christ would come from the house of David and out of the town of Bethlehem was predicted in the Judaic scriptures.* Thus Jesus, born to the house of David at Bethlehem, fulfilled the messianic expectations of the chief priests and the Pharisees; but without ascertaining this fact, they were quick to accuse Jesus as an impostor, considering him as only from Galilee, knowing that the family home where he had been raised was in Nazareth.

The officers who had been sent by the Pharisees to arrest Jesus came away marvelling instead at his wisdom and divinely magnetic presence, saying, "Never man spake like this man." They were scorned by the temple hierarchy, who were proud in the conviction of their infallible authority, and spoke contemptuously of the acclaim accorded Jesus by the less-educated populace "who knoweth not the law."

Nicodemus the Pharisee, who worshipped Jesus in secret,† ventured a mild defense of the Lord and those who believed in him, but his timid remonstration could not influence those who were determined to condemn Jesus.

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* "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting" (Micah 5:2). See also Discourse 36 (prophecies about Christ coming from the "house of David").

† See Discourse 13.

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DISCOURSE 51

"I Am the Light of the World....Before Abraham Was, I Am"

Jesus Extolled Not His Bodily Form
but the Universal Consciousness Within It

❖

"I Am He": Oneness With Absolute Being (Brahman)

❖

Jesus' "Way of Light" to Liberation in Spirit

❖

"Lift Up the Son of Man" or Physical Consciousness
to Christ and Cosmic Consciousness

❖

"Continue in My Word":
Attunement With Cosmic Vibration Through Meditation

❖

Attunement With Christ Consciousness
Makes One Free From All Karma

"Jesus again gives a scientific statement and definition of the Spirit within him....Beholding God as Infinite Glory within himself, he could not extol his individualized ego consciousness."

Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."

The Pharisees therefore said unto him, "Thou bearest record of thyself; thy record is not true."

Jesus answered and said unto them, "Though I bear record of myself, yet my record is true: for I know whence I came, and whither I go; but ye cannot tell whence I come, and whither I go. Ye judge after the flesh; I judge no man. And yet if I judge, my judgment is true: for I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent me. It is also written in your law, that the testimony of two men is true. I am one that bear witness of myself, and the Father that sent me beareth witness of me."

Then said they unto him, "Where is thy Father?"

Jesus answered, "Ye neither know me, nor my Father: if ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also." These words spake Jesus in the treasury, as he taught in the temple: and no man laid hands on him; for his hour was not yet come.

Then said Jesus again unto them, "I go my way, and ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sins: whither I go, ye cannot come."

Then said the Jews, "Will he kill himself? because he saith, 'Whither I go, ye cannot come.'"

And he said unto them, "Ye are from beneath; I am from above: ye are of this world; I am not of this world. I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins."

Then said they unto him, "Who art thou?"

And Jesus saith unto them, "Even the same that I said unto you from the beginning. I have many things to say and to judge of you: but He that sent me is true; and I speak to the world those things which I have heard of Him." They understood not that he spake to them of the Father.

Then said Jesus unto them, "When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak

these things. And He that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please Him." As he spake these words, many believed on him.

Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

They answered him, "We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, 'Ye shall be made free'?"

Jesus answered them, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the Son abideth ever. If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed. I know that ye are Abraham's seed; but ye seek to kill me, because my word hath no place in you. I speak that which I have seen with my Father: and ye do that which ye have seen with your father."

They answered and said unto him, "Abraham is our father."

Jesus saith unto them, "If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham. But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God: this did not Abraham. Ye do the deeds of your father."

Then said they to him, "We be not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God."

Jesus said unto them, "If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but He sent me. Why do ye not understand my speech? Even because ye cannot hear my word. Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it. And because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not. Which of you convinceth me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me? He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God."

Then answered the Jews, and said unto him, "Say we not well that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil?"

Jesus answered, "I have not a devil; but I honour my Father, and ye do dishonour me. And I seek not mine own glory: there is one that seeketh and judgeth. Verily, verily, I say unto you, if a man keep my saying, he shall never see death."

Then said the Jews unto him, "Now we know that thou hast a devil. Abraham is dead, and the prophets; and thou sayest, 'If a man keep my saying, he shall never taste of death.' Art thou greater than our father Abraham, which is dead? And the prophets are dead: whom makest thou thyself?"

Jesus answered, "If I honour myself, my honour is nothing: it is my Father that honoureth me; of whom ye say, that He is your God: Yet ye have not known Him; but I know Him: and if I should say, I know Him not, I shall be a liar like unto you: but I know Him, and keep His saying. Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad."

Then said the Jews unto him, "Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?"

Jesus said unto them, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, before Abraham was, I am." Then took they up stones to cast at him: but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by.

—John 8:12–59*

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* The text preceding this segment of verses (John 8:1–11) in the King James Bible tells the story of the woman taken in adultery. According to Biblical scholars, this story appears in different places in various ancient manuscripts of the New Testament. Many modern editions place it at the beginning of John chapter 8, as in the King James version; other manuscripts place it after Luke 21:38, or elsewhere in the Gospel of John. It is commented on in Discourse 35, along with other passages containing Jesus' teachings on the forgiveness of sins. *(Publisher's Note)*

DISCOURSE 51

"I Am the Light of the World.... Before Abraham Was, I Am"

Then Jesus spake again unto them, saying, "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" (John 8:12).

"From the Christ Intelligence, which I behold as my own expanded Self, emanates the objectifying creative light of Cosmic Energy out of which 'the world'—the physical cosmos—has been evolved. The devotee whose consciousness follows this vibratory light in the inner communion of meditation is led through increasingly blissful conscious, subconscious, and superconscious states, and ultimately arrives at the blessedness of Christ Consciousness. Such devotees no longer 'walk in darkness,' blinded by ignorance engendered in limited human consciousness by cosmic delusion. Their life force unites with the Cosmic Light, Cosmic Energy: the Word or Holy Ghost Creative Power that is the source and life principle of all living beings—and of all objects, in which life is potentially present."

Follow the vibratory light of God perceived in inner communion of meditation

The deep meanings of "light" and "darkness" according to metaphysical science were explained in the commentary on earlier verses in St. John's Gospel: "In him [the Word] was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not....That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world."

"And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil."*

In the present verse, Jesus again gives a scientific statement and definition of the Spirit within him.

An ordinary person is aware of his consciousness and life force as limited by the body; Jesus and spiritually advanced souls feel the physical universe as their body, with all-pervading Cosmic Energy as the life in the veins of their universal form, and infinite Christ Consciousness as their indwelling Self.

Jesus' words "I am" in the context of this verse thus refer to Christ Consciousness—the subjective Intelligence of the universe. The "light of the world" refers to Cosmic Energy, the Word or Holy Ghost, which informs the physical cosmos, endowing all beings and objects therein with the life of intelligent vibratory power—each element from atom to sage manifesting that intelligent life according to its evolutionary potential.

The material world is spoken of in the scriptures of East and West as "darkness" because therein the effulgent Spirit-essence of all things is obscured. By deep meditation, the devotee gains the divine perception of his spiritual eye at the Christ Consciousness centre in the forehead; in the light of that "single eye" the darkness of delusion is dispelled. He walks in a world that is no longer an environment of gross matter, but a wondrous structure of luminous cosmic energy and intelligence.†

Scriptural literalists who are bound by the dogma of their intellectually interpreted theological doctrines, and who do not meditate, can understand only by analogous conjecture why Jesus called himself the "light of the world" and what kind of spiritual seeking would lead them to the fulfilment of Jesus' promise: "he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness." Thus Jesus prophesied: "Ye shall seek me, and shall not

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* John 1:4–5, 9 (see Discourse 1) and John 3:19 (see Discourse 15).

† "Oh grace abounding that had made me fit
to fix my eyes on the eternal light
until my vision was consumed in It!

I saw within Its depth how It conceives
all things in a single volume bound by Love,
of which the universe is the scattered leaves."

—Dante, *The Divine Comedy: Paradiso*, trans. John Ciardi (New York: Mentor Books, 1961), Canto XXXIII, 82–87.

find me: and where I am, thither ye cannot come."* Theoretical and emotional suppositions open no portals to the presence of Christ. The consciousness of the seeker must be actually lifted from the physical realm to the plane of Christ Consciousness where he is to be found.

Christians of merely theological understanding picture Jesus Christ as limited by a form and the beauteous features of a human figure; but souls who by meditation have identified their consciousness with the universal, omnipresent consciousness that was manifest in Jesus behold the cosmos as the body of Christ and the energy in it as his life and the Intelligence secreted within that life as his Christ Consciousness.

It is by worshipping Christ in the self-erected temple of meditation with its high altar of Self-realization that one can bring within his own soul a "second coming" of the Christ Consciousness that was in Jesus.

The Pharisees therefore said unto him, "Thou bearest record of thyself; thy record is not true."

Jesus answered and said unto them, "Though I bear record of myself; yet my record is true: for I know whence I came, and whither I go; but ye cannot tell whence I come, and whither I go. Ye judge after the flesh; I judge no man. And yet if I judge, my judgment is true: for I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent me. It is also written in your law, that the testimony of two men is true. I am one that bear witness of myself, and the Father that sent me beareth witness of me" (John 8:13–18).

"Because my mind is not limited by a body-identified ego, I know through divine memory how my incarnate consciousness came from Christ Consciousness and thus will ultimately merge again in that formless Omnipresent Omniscience. I can therefore testify all about myself, the nature of my Christ Consciousness, without the truth being distorted by the unreliable witness of the physical ego. Egotistical persons extol themselves as something more than they are. But my true Self, being the Christ Consciousness manifest through my con-

Jesus extolled not his bodily form but the Universal Consciousness within it

* John 7:34 (see Discourse 50).

sciousness, cannot exaggerate or speak untruth when it proclaims itself. Because you know not how Christ Consciousness descended in my bodily form called Jesus, or where that manifestation will vanish after my body is no more on earth, you are judging after the manner of the flesh—a worldly judgment that sees no further than bodily limitations.

"The Christ Consciousness in me beholds every soul made after the image of the Infinite; therefore I do not judge or measure man according to his physical or mental attributes. Yet if I use my omniscient Christ Intelligence, I know how much a soul is identified with its physical form and human characteristics, and that judgment is unerringly accurate. If my consciousness were 'alone,' isolated from God-consciousness, then my judgment would be limited and subject to error. But since my consciousness is charged with the divine wisdom of the Father, my judgment about everything is true.

"It is described in your human law that the consonant testimony of two individuals is acceptable as truth.* I (my human consciousness manifesting the Christ Consciousness) am one witness to the truth I speak; and the Father (Cosmic Consciousness beyond all vibratory creation) that sent me (the Christ Consciousness that is His manifestation in creation) beareth witness of me."

Egotistical persons are wont to exaggerate their merits. But since Jesus spoke from his oneness with the Father, any of his statements that seemed to extol himself were in fact impersonal references to the Cosmic Consciousness of his Heavenly Father. Therefore, it was entirely proper for Jesus to declare himself through his ego-disengaged divine wisdom.

Then said they unto him, "Where is thy Father?"

Jesus answered, "Ye neither know me, nor my Father: If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also." These words spake Jesus in the treasury, as he taught in the temple: and no man laid hands on him, for his hour was not yet come (John 8:19–20).

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* Jesus' citing of the Mosaic law refers to Deuteronomy 17:6 and 19:15.

66 You have not communed with the Christ Consciousness behind my consciousness, nor with the Cosmic Consciousness, my originator and Father. If you had communed by meditation with the Christ Consciousness, you would have realized its presence within me; then automatically you would also have perceived the Cosmic Consciousness whose only reflection in creation is the Christ Consciousness."

Then said Jesus again unto them, "I go my way, and ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sins: whither I go, ye cannot come."

Then said the Jews, "Will he kill himself? because he saith, 'Whither I go, ye cannot come.'"

And he said unto them, "Ye are from beneath; I am from above: ye are of this world; I am not of this world. I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins" (John 8:21–24).

66 I follow the way as is directed by the Christ Consciousness in me; and some day when I am gone from the earth, you shall try to follow me, but not finding me, you will die with your bad karma and be subject to reincarnation. Unless you seek me in the elevated states of deep meditation, you cannot comprehend in the present state of your consciousness the Christ Consciousness wherein my human consciousness has merged.

"Ye are of this world; I am not of this world"

"You are 'of this world,' being bound to the earth by entanglements of material desires and delusive imaginings; your captive souls reincarnate repeatedly on this plane of gross vibration. But my Spirit-liberated soul, although voluntarily encased in a body moving on this earth, is 'from above' and does not belong to the God-obscuring material plane.

"That is why I told you that you would 'die in your sins': Although your souls are immortal, still the law of karma and reincarnation will force you to experience death of the physical body with each rebirth impelled by your mortal attachments. As long as you cling to body consciousness, your spiritual lives will be dead, entombed in the sepulchre of your errant sinful actions. Because you have not believed in the Christ Consciousness in me and that it is the reflection of the

Cosmic Consciousness of my Father, you will not make the effort to realize Divinity in your own souls. This sin of omission will keep your souls buried beneath self-perpetuated delusions of mortality."

Jesus speaks of persons in delusion as "from beneath" and "of this world," referring to the fact that, owing to their material karma, such persons remain through numerous successive incarnations in the lower or physical plane of God's creation, beneath or under the influence of earthly vibrations and the material laws of nature.

The word "above" in "I am from above" signifies the finer astral and causal regions of vibration where dwell those advanced souls who have freed themselves of physical karma, and the vibrationless sphere of oneness with God that is the abode of fully liberated masters. By saying "I am not of this world," Jesus signifies that his Christ Consciousness was omnipresent in the triune physical-astral-causal cosmos and not tied to one tiny clod of earth in physical space called "the world."

The words "I am He" used by Jesus are a declaration of ultimate truth that has similarly been ecstatically realized and uttered by master minds of India who lived before and after the time of Jesus. The *Isha Upanishad* says: "That absolute Self abiding in the transcendental effulgence, verily, I am He." Elsewhere in the Upanishads we find, similarly, the sacred truth-affirmations *Aham Brahmasmi* ("I am Brahman—Spirit"), *Ayam Atma Brahma* ("This Self is Spirit"), and *Tat Tvam Asi* ("Thou art That"). The scriptural mantra *Aham-Sa* or *'Ham-sa* (literally, "I am He") are potent Sanskrit syllables that possess a vibratory connection with the incoming and the outgoing breath. Thus with his every breath man unconsciously asserts the truth of his being: *I am He!*

"I am He": oneness with Absolute Being (Brahman)

Jesus—as did all liberated masters qualified to make such self-declarations—meant that he knew by direct realization that the Christ Consciousness (*Kutastha Chaitanya*) within himself was one with Cosmic Consciousness—the Father or Absolute Being (Brahman).*

* "The ancient sage Patanjali, in *Yoga Sutras* 1:17–18, refers to two basic categories of *samadhi:* (1) *samprajnata* and (2) *asamprajnata*. As applied to advanced stages of realization, *samprajnata* refers to *savikalpa* ('with difference') *samadhi,* or divine union in which there remains some distinction between the knower and the known, as in the realization 'Thou and I are One.' In greater or lesser degree, some modifications of nature remain. But in *asamprajnata samadhi,* all differentiations of nature are resolved into the one Spirit. The consciousness of 'Thou and I are One' becomes 'I am He, who

When Jesus said, "For if ye believe not that I am He, ye shall die in your sins," he meant that those who are identified with their bodies and do not attain the transcendent states in meditation cannot know that their true Self, the soul, is a reflection of Spirit ("I am He"). Divine souls who live on earth identified with Cosmic Consciousness create no human desires or binding karma and thus, at death, become one with Spirit. But persons who pass their lifetime satisfying the body and gratifying the ego, unaware of the Divine Image in themselves, amass earthly karma or sins. When they die with those unresolved karmic consequences and with unfulfilled earthly desires, they must reincarnate again and again to resolve all mortal entanglements.

Jesus' "way of light" to liberation in Spirit

As Jesus said, "I go my way...whither I go, ye cannot come," so also Bhagavan Krishna in the Gita, instructing his disciple Arjuna, delineated the paths traversed at death by enlightened and earthbound souls respectively: "I shall now declare unto thee, O Arjuna, the path, traversing which at the time of death, yogis attain freedom; and also the path wherein there is rebirth....These two paths for exiting from the world are reckoned eternal. The way of light leads to release, the way of darkness leads to rebirth."*

Jesus declared (in verse 12, above) that those who would follow him "shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." The Gita describes how at the time of physical death the soul follows either the "way of light"—the opening of the spiritual eye, the awakening of the subtle cerebrospinal centres, and the ascension of life force and consciousness through them to Cosmic Consciousness and liberation in Spirit—or the "way of darkness" that is the descension or return to body consciousness or rebirth of those yet unable to open fully all the cerebrospinal doors that lead ultimately to Spirit. That way is followed by yet-to-be perfected souls who are "of this world," of whom Jesus said, "Whither I go, ye cannot come."

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has become this little form of "I" and all forms.' This is not the egotist's proclamation, 'I am God!'—the brass crown of megalomania—but rather the full realization of the absolute truth: God is the only Reality. Thus *asamprajnata*, in its absolute definition, is *nirvikalpa* ('without difference') *samadhi*, the highest yoga or union manifested by fully liberated masters or those on the threshold of soul freedom."—*God Talks With Arjuna: The Bhagavad Gita*

* *God Talks With Arjuna: The Bhagavad Gita* VIII:23, 26.

Saint Paul testified, "I protest by our rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily."* He was able "daily" in transcendent inner communion to make this inner ascension to the realization of Spirit.

Then said they unto him, "Who art thou?"

And Jesus saith unto them, "Even the same that I said unto you from the beginning. I have many things to say and to judge of you: but He that sent me is true; and I speak to the world those things which I have heard of Him." They understood not that he spake to them of the Father (John 8:25–27).

66 I told you from the beginning that 'I am He,' and of truth I am that. I have many truths to declare unto you; and must pass judgment, according to the standard of my intuitive wisdom, about your conduct and life in general. I declare unto you that the great God who is invisible and thus unreal to you, because you cannot perceive Him through your senses, truly exists. Through the infallible intuitive realization within me I know and testify of His Absolute Existence. Sense perceptions give you knowledge of the appearance of things, but the intuition within you can give you realization of the Substance behind appearances. All the utterances of wisdom that I have come to give to the world are illumining emanations of Cosmic Vibration flowing through me from the Infinite."

Then said Jesus unto them, "When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things. And He that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please Him." As he spake these words, many believed on him (John 8:28–30).

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*I Corinthians 15:31. "Our rejoicing" is the correct translation; not, as usually given, "your rejoicing." Saint Paul was referring to the *universality* of the Christ Consciousness.

The esoteric meaning of Jesus' words "when ye have lifted up the Son of man" was explicated in the commentary on earlier verses in St. John: "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up."* Thus these words in the present verses signify:

"Lift up the son of man" or physical consciousness to Christ and Cosmic Consciousness

"When by deep meditation you will lift your consciousness from the son of man or physical body, then you will be able to realize the universal Christ Consciousness, which is present within you and me. Realizing that, you will further perceive that this inherent Christ Consciousness is the reflection of the Cosmic Consciousness. And when you realize the Christ Consciousness within yourself and myself, then you will know why I say I perform no bodily nor mental actions actuated by the ego or human consciousness. As my Father or Cosmic Consciousness has transmitted His wisdom to the Christ Consciousness in me, so my consciousness reveals that wisdom alone.

"The Cosmic Consciousness, which projected and materialised my body, is inseparably with me, just as the wave is informed and indispensably sustained by the ocean. The wave cannot exist without the ocean behind it; so also the Heavenly Father has not isolated my body from Him but always remains behind my consciousness, sustaining it. Those who are tuned to their human desires guide their bodies and minds according to the dictates of those impulses. But my consciousness is continuously aware of the presence of the Father in me; thus my human consciousness always manifests those actions that please the Father and are in tune with His wishes."

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Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:31–32).

66 If you will persist in attunement with the Cosmic Vibration (as heard in meditation) and with the Christ Consciousness in that sacred sound, then indeed you may consider yourselves my disciples, disciplined and guided by my word or Christ Intelligence within you.

* John 3:14 (see Discourse 14).

By this you will be able to know all truth—about yourself, the mysteries of life, and the drama of the cosmos. You will no longer identify yourselves with human desires and the consequent bondage of karma, thereby freeing your soul from delusion and reincarnations."

"Continue in my word": attunement with Cosmic Vibration through meditation

By "continue in my word," Jesus advised his followers to heed conscientiously his words of wisdom about faithfully practising the meditation technique of contacting the Holy Cosmic Vibratory Sound and the Christ Consciousness in it, thus becoming his true disciples.*

Jesus spoke to the populace in parables and metaphors to awaken their curiosity for truth, but to the disciples he taught plain truths and techniques of meditation for entering the inner kingdom of God.

It is evident that merely believing in the words of Christ does not make one a qualified disciple of Christ. Jesus wanted true aspirants to strive to manifest the Christ Consciousness which was present in him, to be one who feels continuously in his daily life the guiding presence of the Infinite Christ that frees the soul from ignorance and bestows salvation.

They answered him, "We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, 'Ye shall be made free'?"

Jesus answered them, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the Son abideth ever. If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed. I know that ye are Abraham's seed; but ye seek to kill me, because my word hath no place in you. I speak that which I have seen with my Father: and ye do that which ye have seen with your father" (John 8:33–38).

"With the certainty of truth, which I intuitively feel within myself, I declare unto you that anyone who performs erroneous, or sinful, actions against the happiness of his soul creates sin-

* Though some modern translations render this verse (John 8:31) as "if you adhere to my teachings" or "if you live as I tell you to," the original Greek for "word" in this verse is *logos*—the same term used in John 1:1: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was God." (See Discourse 1.)

ful habits. Any individual working under the influence of a strong, sinful habit becomes its bond servant in the bodily dwelling.

Attunement with Christ Consciousness makes one free from all karma

"But even if an individual is bonded in servitude to a sinful habit, that enslaved consciousness is only a temporary condition. Sinful habits, no matter how strong, cannot forever occupy the soul's bodily mansion of consciousness. Every individual in thrall to sinful habits must remember that his everlasting consciousness is the immortal soul in which the Son, or Christ Consciousness, is templed. The devotee who knows that the real Master who abides forever in the true Self, the soul, is the Christ Consciousness, or the Son (and not sin), and who tunes his consciousness with Christ Consciousness, becomes free from all human karma. Therefore, if through the exercise of your volition you make the spiritual effort to find freedom from cosmic delusion, and thereby know me as the Christ Consciousness present in you, that Consciousness will free you from all human vassalage.

"I know that you are the descendants of Abraham, and more importantly that you are made after the image of my Father; but because you do not receive the all-seeing wisdom of my words, you have become the servant of sin in your desire to kill me. Therefore, being temporarily servile to sinful thoughts, you are in bondage. If you would only be in tune with my word, the Cosmic Vibration, you could be free, no longer the servant of sin. My words are of the wisdom of the Heavenly Father, which I intuitively feel within myself, whereas you speak and act according to the limited understanding and behaviour of mortal consciousness, as do your earthly parents."

Jesus points out to the descendants of Abraham that they had lost the quality of their good ancestry by succumbing to ignorance, sinful thoughts, and following tradition and family habits instead of God's laws and truth.

Some high-caste Brahmins of India also boast of their divine parentage, as do the hierarchy of many cultures. But Jesus points out that physical good birth in itself is not an adequate credential. Each soul, though an image of God and notwithstanding good parentage, can temporarily become the servant of sinful habits, as Jesus admonished the descendants of Abraham. But while Jesus speaks of their degradation, he also reminds them that they could not remain in servitude to sin forever, but should realize that they are eternally made in the image of God.

They answered and said unto him, "Abraham is our father."

Jesus saith unto them, "If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham. But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God: this did not Abraham. Ye do the deeds of your father."

Then said they to him, "We be not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God."

Jesus said unto them, "If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceed forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but He sent me. Why do ye not understand my speech? Even because ye cannot hear my word. Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it. And because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not. Which of you convinceth me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me? He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God" (John 8:39–47).

66 If by meditation you knew God as your Father, you would love me, for the Christ Consciousness in me is the reflection of God the Father, and my body in which that consciousness is encased also came from Him. I was not born of myself—reincarnated because of personal desires; He has sent my body to the earth that the Christ Consciousness reflected in me might rouse sleeping souls and remind them of the Christ Consciousness present also in them.

Persons under the influence of satanic delusion cannot comprehend higher truth

"Do you realize why you cannot understand my speech? It is because your consciousness is not tuned to the Cosmic Vibration, the Word; therefore you do not comprehend the truth I speak, which is inspired by Christ Consciousness within that Cosmic Vibratory Word. You live in oblivious forgetfulness of the Spirit within you; and by creating evil habits you are possessed by satanic ignorance, which acts as your guiding advisory father. In succumbing to the lustful tendencies implanted within you by your pseudofather, you culture satanic habits that become the im-

pelling force of your actions. Satan and his cohorts of satanic habits are the murderers of soul happiness from the beginning of creation; they do not manifest truth because it is shut out of their very nature of cosmic delusion. Satan speaks lies, works delusion, 'of his own'—because of the rebellious misuse of his God-given creative free choice. Satan is the father of all cosmic delusion, the consummate liar about the nature of God and truth.*

"Through your evil habits you have invited the cosmic delusion of Satan to guide you; his skill at hiding truth has confounded your belief. None of you has proven any sin on my part, so why should you not be convinced of the truth as I have clearly presented it to you?

"All great ones, such as Abraham and the prophets, who are true devotees of God, tuned their consciousness by the interiorization of meditation to the Cosmic Vibration—God's word within them. You have never entered that interiorized meditative state; therefore you have not heard the Cosmic Vibration and felt the presence of God therein. Thus you have no real concept of the consciousness of one who realizes he has come from God."

Jesus warns that lust or evil tendencies are implanted in man by Satan, and anyone who acts according to the dictates of these incitements invites Satan to be his guiding force. Jesus describes Satan as a liar, for by cosmic delusion he makes God disappear from man's sight behind the illusions of gross matter. The true devotee, who feels the presence of God within himself, is not deceived by the prevarications of cosmic delusion; he perceives God as the Only Existing Substance in nature, space, and infinity.

Though all men and women are created in the image of God, still Jesus says that some—those who meditate regularly and deeply—are "of God," perceiving His presence within them as Cosmic Vibration, the Word; whereas others, being identified with their satanic habits, are "not of God," oblivious to His immanence.

"The devil sinneth from the beginning," wrote Saint John in his first Epistle to the early followers of Jesus. "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil."† That is, the manifestation of Christ Consciousness within

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*The nature of Satan ("the devil") as the perpetrator of *maya*, cosmic delusion, is explained in Discourse 7.

†First Epistle of St. John, 3:8.

man's own being effortlessly destroys the illusions or "works of the devil."

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Then answered the Jews, and said unto him, "Say we not well that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil?"

Jesus answered, "I have not a devil; but I honour my Father, and ye do dishonour me. And I seek not mine own glory: there is one that seeketh and judgeth. Verily, verily, I say unto you, if a man keep my saying, he shall never see death" (John 8:48–51).

66 I 9 being aware of the Christ Consciousness within me, am not susceptible to any devil acolytes of Satan's cosmic delusion. Rather I, Christ Consciousness, live up to the expectations of God the Father whose reflection I am; yet you dishonour that righteousness. My human consciousness seeks no earthly glory, but is glorified with the Christ Consciousness within me. There is one Cosmic Law that seeks to glorify the Father by rewarding the manifestations of goodness and chastening those of evil; and to that end this law judges people according to their good or bad karma.

"Verily by the truth within me, I declare to every one of you that if a devotee keeps my saying—that is, if by daily meditation he contacts the Cosmic Vibration and Christ Consciousness, even as I feel it within myself, and follows my teachings and becomes fixed in the Absolute Changeless—he shall never find his inner vision dismayed by the disturbing mutations ('death') affecting the body and all matter ruled by the relentless law of change."

The changeless state, free from the changeful illusions of life and death

The inner eye of wisdom in Jesus was open, making it impossible for the darkness of any devil of delusive ignorance to be within him. Beholding God as Infinite Glory within himself, he could not extol his individualized ego consciousness.

Most people, measuring themselves in terms of their material and mental acquisitions and family relations, magnify their mortal egos. But when a devotee detaches his soul consciousness from the body and its relationships, he beholds within him nothing but God and rejoices to glorify naught else but Him. Thus Jesus points out that while he did

not seek to glorify himself, the Cosmic Law seeks the glory of God in the virtues of men and declares its judgment about them.

When Jesus uses the words "keep my saying," he distinctly emphasizes that one has daily to live his teachings and methods of contacting the Cosmic Vibration in order to remain continuously in Christ Consciousness, free from the torpor of delusion ("death").* When a man is tossing on buffeting waves, he has no time to see the whole ocean; but if he gets out of the breakers and stands on the shore, he can have a clear overall perspective. Similarly, an ordinary individual who is frantically engaged in coping with the changes affecting his body and environment cannot perceive the Immutable Infinite within him. But when the devotee removes himself from outer turmoil by meditation and tunes his consciousness with the Cosmic Vibration and Christ Consciousness within him, he beholds the Eternal Changelessness free from the changeful illusory visions of life.

Then said the Jews unto him, "Now we know that thou hast a devil. Abraham is dead, and the prophets; and thou sayest, 'If a man keep my saying, he shall never taste of death.' Art thou greater than our father Abraham, which is dead? And the prophets are dead: whom makest thou thyself?"

Jesus answered, "If I honour myself, my honour is nothing: it is my Father that honoureth me; of whom ye say, that He is your God: Yet ye have not known Him; but I know Him: and if I should say, I know Him not, I shall be a liar like unto you: but I know Him, and keep His saying. Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad" (John 8:52–56).

66 If I honour my ego and its bodily connections, that acclaim is of little value to the world or God. It is the Heavenly Father within me who has been pleased to accept my life and actions, who has made

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* In *Autobiography of a Yogi*, I quoted Jesus, with the following observation: "'If a man keep my saying (remain unbrokenly in the Christ Consciousness), he shall never see death.' In these words Jesus was not referring to immortal life in the physical body —a monotonous confinement one would hardly mete out to a sinner, much less a saint! The illumined man of whom Christ spoke is one who has awakened from the deathly trance of ignorance to Eternal Life."

my life of value to the world. The same God whom you declare as your own God recognises the truth in me and wants you all to recognise that truth that you might be benefited therefrom.

"You speak of your God about whom you know nothing, but I know that I know Him; if I were to satisfy you by saying my human consciousness is not cognizant of the Cosmic Consciousness within it, I would be speaking untruth as you in your ignorance are used to doing. But I know the Heavenly Consciousness within me and I observe all the divine rules ('keep His sayings') in my life, which I receive from the inner vibrations of that Supreme Consciousness.

"Your enlightened father, Abraham, being inwardly tuned to Christ Consciousness, was filled with divine bliss beholding 'my day' —the light within him of the Christ Consciousness which is now within me. Abraham 'saw it'—the wisdom in Christ Consciousness (which I and all liberated souls behold)—and was filled with divine delight, the same joy in which I rejoice."

Jesus expressed deep truths when he said, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad." Jesus with his Christ Consciousness and inner vision could distinctly see all past, present, and future in his Eternal Now consciousness. Ordinarily, the consciousness of mortals is interrupted, cut off, by the punctuation of death; but Jesus, having attained the Absolute, could feel exactly what the liberated soul of Abraham felt centuries earlier—the eternity-spanning Christ Consciousness that Jesus experienced within himself, the joy of Christ Consciousness felt uniformly the same by any advanced or liberated soul.

Jesus does not say whether he lived in another form in the time of Abraham ("rejoiced to see my day"), but that with the power of the infinite omniscience of his eternal Christ Consciousness he could feel exactly what Abraham felt in the "day," or light of Abraham's divine realization, long before the body of Jesus was born on earth.

Then said the Jews unto him, "Thou are not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?"

Jesus said unto them, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, before Abraham was, I am."

Then took they up stones to cast at him: but Jesus hid him-

self, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by (John 8:57–59).

66 Verily, by the eternal, ever present Christ Consciousness within me, I behold no division of past, present, or future in my consciousness of the Eternal Now, which is aware of all happenings before the time of Abraham, all happenings after him, and all happenings yet to come throughout eternity."

Consciousness of the Eternal Now: "Before Abraham was, I am"

In the Christ Consciousness of Jesus, the divisions of past, present, and future were annihilated. His omnipresent consciousness pierced the accommodative mayic veils of time and space. Whatever he felt was as a part of his universal Self united with God. He realized that naught exists in reality but God, with all happenings and all things as manifestations of God, taking place within God and within his God-united Self, and everlastingly imprinted on the film of Infinity. Thus with a cosmic breath of awe Jesus could proclaim: "Before Abraham was, I am."*

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* Physicists as well as illumined sages aver that time is not an absolute reality. In *The Elegant Universe: Superstrings, Hidden Dimensions, and the Quest for the Ultimate Theory* (New York: Vintage Books, 2000), Dr. Brian Greene writes: "Einstein's work showed that concepts such as space and time, which had previously seemed to be separate and absolute, are actually interwoven and relative"—a fact observable, for instance, in that the force of gravity distorts not only the fabric of space, but of time itself. Indeed, in the massive gravitational fields of black holes, "time seems to slow down or even come to a full stop," according to *Discover* magazine (Dec. 2000).

In "an ultramicroscopic examination of space and time," writes Professor Greene, "the conventional notions of left and right, back and forth, up and down (and even of before and after) lose their meaning." Einstein put it succinctly in a letter written shortly before his death in 1955: "For us believing physicists, the distinction between past, present, and future is only an illusion, even if a stubborn one."

To ordinary human perception, the "illusion" is persistent indeed. "Such is the great influence of Time which governs the universe," wrote Swami Sri Yukteswar in *The Holy Science* in 1894. "No man can overcome this influence except him who, blessed with pure love, the heavenly gift of nature, becomes divine; being baptized in the sacred stream *Pranava* (the holy *Aum* vibration), he comprehends the Kingdom of God."

The great *jnanavatar* ("incarnation of wisdom") explained the genesis of time and the other universal delusions inherent in creation, and how liberated souls such as Jesus transcend them: "From *Aum* (*Pranava*, the Word, the manifestation of the Omnipotent Force), come *Kala*, Time; *Desa*, Space; and *Anu*, the Atom (the vibratory structure of creation)....In its different aspects *Aum* presents the idea of change, which is Time, *Kala*, in the Ever-Unchangeable; and the idea of division, which is Space, *Desa*,

Since nothing can exist without the consciousness of God, an advanced devotee whose consciousness is tuned to the universal Christ Consciousness ubiquitous in the sphere of creation realizes that the light of his God-consciousness illumines and reveals—simultaneously at all times—the objectified dimensions of space and the chambers of past, present, and future. "O Arjuna, I am aware of the creatures of the past, the present, and the future; but Me no one knows."* The individual who is yet subject to delusion is denied perception of the Ever Present as he beholds all events as happening in the continuum of time, and sensory objects existing in relation to one another as occupying dimensions of space.

If a man dreams he is making a world tour by bicycle in a span of several years, he creates a consciousness of space and time in his own imagination that does not exist when he awakes. The vast mileage and its scenery occupied the limited space of his mind; the events of his tour, unfolding one upon another, transpired in a fraction of the time of his perceived experience. Jesus and great masters who have awakened in God and forsaken the cosmic dream find space and time and their captive objects and happenings all sustained in the imaginings of God and thus, though temporarily evident, are essentially unreal.

In order to be a part of God's dream-drama, the divine man outwardly adapts to the nature of the dream while inwardly seeing his Spirit-identified Self as an eternal existence of omnipresent consciousness: "I am present before Abraham was, I am present in the here and now, and being all-pervading I am conscious of my presence in the infinite future."

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in the Ever-Indivisible. The ensuing effect is the idea of particles—the innumerable atoms, *patra* or *anu*. These four—the Word, Time, Space, and the Atom—are therefore one and the same, and substantially nothing but mere ideas....

"[Man] achieves salvation by dissolving the four original ideas...primal thoughts by which creation sprang into being," he goes on to say. That transcendent state is attained when, by highest yoga meditation, one takes his consciousness through the *Brahmarandhra* (see Discourse 75), "the door between two creations, material and spiritual. When Ego, the son of man, comes to the door, he comprehends the Spiritual Light and becomes baptized therein. And passing through this door he comes above the ideational creation of Darkness, *Maya,* and entering into the spiritual world, receives the true Light and becomes the Son of God." *(Publisher's Note)*

* *God Talks With Arjuna: The Bhagavad Gita* VII:26.

DISCOURSE 52

"I Am the Door.... I Am the Good Shepherd.... I and My Father Are One"

Cause of Misfortunes: Individual Karma or Mass Karma

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"While It Is Day": The Cosmic Cycles of Creation and Dissolution

❖

Distinguishing True Shepherds of Souls From False Prophets

❖

Christ Consciousness Is the Only Portal to Liberation

❖

"The Good Shepherd":
A True Guru Attuned to Christ Consciousness

❖

"I and My Father Are One"

❖

"Ye Are Gods": All Souls Are Made in the Pure Divine Image

"The guru bestows spiritual baptism on the devotee, by which God unlocks the entryway of the spiritual eye through which the devotee follows the 'voice' (the Holy Ghost vibration) of the shepherd of Christ Consciousness to the Cosmic Consciousness of God."

And as Jesus passed by, *he saw a man which was blind from his birth. And his disciples asked him, saying, "Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?"*

Jesus answered, "Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him. I must work the works of Him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world."

When he had thus spoken, he spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and he anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay, and said unto him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam," (which is by interpretation, Sent). He went his way therefore, and washed, and came seeing.

The neighbours therefore, and they which before had seen him that he was blind, said, "Is not this he that sat and begged?" Some said, "This is he": others said, "He is like him": but he said, "I am he." Therefore said they unto him, "How were thine eyes opened?" He answered and said, "A man that is called Jesus made clay, and anointed mine eyes, and said unto me, 'Go to the pool of Siloam, and wash': and I went and washed, and I received sight."

Then said they unto him, "Where is he?" He said, "I know not." They brought to the Pharisees him that aforetime was blind. And it was the Sabbath day when Jesus made the clay, and opened his eyes. Then again the Pharisees also asked him how he had received his sight. He said unto them, "He put clay upon mine eyes, and I washed, and do see."

Therefore said some of the Pharisees, "This man is not of God, because he keepeth not the Sabbath day." Others said, "How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles?" And there was a division among them.

They say unto the blind man again, "What sayest thou of him, that he hath opened thine eyes?" He said, "He is a prophet." But the Jews did not believe concerning him, that he had been blind, and received his sight, until they called

the parents of him that had received his sight. And they asked them, saying, "Is this your son, who ye say was born blind? How then doth he now see?" His parents answered them and said, "We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind: But by what means he now seeth, we know not; or who hath opened his eyes, we know not: he is of age; ask him: he shall speak for himself."

These words spake his parents, because they feared the Jews: for the Jews had agreed already, that if any man did confess that he was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue. Therefore said his parents, "He is of age; ask him." Then again called they the man that was blind, and said unto him, "Give God the praise: we know that this man is a sinner." He answered and said, "Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see." Then said they to him again, "What did he to thee? How opened he thine eyes?"

He answered them, "I have told you already, and ye did not hear: wherefore would ye hear it again? Will ye also be his disciples?" Then they reviled him, and said, "Thou art his disciple; but we are Moses' disciples. We know that God spake unto Moses: as for this fellow, we know not from whence he is."

The man answered and said unto them, "Why herein is a marvellous thing, that ye know not from whence he is, and yet he hath opened mine eyes. Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth His will, him He heareth. Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind. If this man were not of God, he could do nothing." They answered and said unto him, "Thou wast altogether born in sins, and dost thou teach us?" And they cast him out.

Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when he had found him, he said unto him, "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?"

He answered and said, "Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him?"

And Jesus said unto him, "Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee."

And he said, "Lord, I believe." And he worshipped him.

And Jesus said, "For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind."

And some of the Pharisees which were with him heard these words, and said unto him, "Are we blind also?"

Jesus said unto them, "If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, 'We see'; therefore your sin remaineth.

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice. And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers."

This parable spake Jesus unto them: but they understood not what things they were which he spake unto them.

Then said Jesus unto them again, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep. All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture. The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.

"I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. The hireling fleeth, because

he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep. I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep. And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.

"Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father."

There was a division therefore again among the Jews for these sayings. And many of them said, "He hath a devil, and is mad; why hear ye him?" Others said, "These are not the words of him that hath a devil. Can a devil open the eyes of the blind?"

And it was at Jerusalem the feast of the dedication, and it was winter. And Jesus walked in the temple in Solomon's porch. Then came the Jews round about him, and said unto him, "How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly."

Jesus answered them, "I told you, and ye believed not: the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me. But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one."

Then the Jews took up stones again to stone him. Jesus answered them, "Many good works have I shewed you from my Father; for which of those works do ye stone me?"

The Jews answered him, saying, "For a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God."

Jesus answered them, "Is it not written in your law, 'I said, "Ye are gods"'? If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken; say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, 'Thou blasphemest'; because I said, 'I am the Son of God'? If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works: that ye may know, and believe, that the Father is in me, and I in Him."

Therefore they sought again to take him: but he escaped out of their hand, and went away again beyond Jordan into the place where John at first baptized; and there he abode.

And many resorted unto him, and said, "John did no miracle: but all things that John spake of this man were true." And many believed on him there.

—*John 9:1—10:42*

DISCOURSE 52

"I Am the Door.... I Am the Good Shepherd.... I and My Father Are One"

And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth. And his disciples asked him, saying, "Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?"

Jesus answered, "Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him. I must work the works of Him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world" (John 9:1–5).

Jesus' statement that the man was born blind not because of his sin or the sin of his parents is a source of bewilderment to many, who think he meant that God arbitrarily denied sight to the man in order that His divine healing power might be manifested through Jesus. To those who know God as the All-Compassionate Father, it is inconceivable that He would make one of His children suffer for years merely to create an opportunity for a miraculous display. Rather, Jesus meant that the man's affliction was linked to hidden causes formulated in his past lives that brought him to his present condition, and not by anything he or his parents had done in their current

Cause of misfortunes: individual karma or mass karma

incarnations. In any case, since the man was born blind, there was no opportunity for any sin in his present existence to be the cause of his malady.* Nevertheless, being good in his present life, and drawing from past-life virtues, he had accrued sufficient good karma "that the works of God should be made manifest in him"—that is, to merit a miracle of divine healing by his coming in contact with God's emissary, Jesus.

Evil conditions that befall man may be caused not only by the individual karma of sin, but by mass or universal karma: man-made or natural calamities arising from conditions influenced or triggered by universal forces or the cumulative vibrations and actions of the masses in general. For example, suppose all of the passengers die in the crash of an airliner caught in a thunderstorm; that would not necessarily imply that all those persons were karmically predisposed to perish in that disaster. It was an act of nature affecting that area at that time, and the fact that the passengers happened to have chosen that flight. Though no specific past sin was necessarily directly related to their death in that way, the positive side is that at least some adverse personal karma of each individual was consummated by the tragedy. But consider alternatively that there was a miracle survival of one of the passengers, and of some interference that prevented another person from boarding that flight; some intervening personal good karma specifically saved those individuals. It could be concluded that these persons were spared "that the works of God should be made manifest"—that God expresses His compassion and protection in the workings of the karmic law by which the effects of one's personal good actions can neutralize or mitigate in oneself the consequences of some otherwise devastating mass disaster.

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* In his scholarly study *Reincarnation for the Christian* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1974) Dr. Quincy Howe, Jr., former Professor of Comparative Religion at Scripps College, writes about this incident of the man blind from birth:

"There is a glaring inconsistency in the question posed by the disciples. They ask the Lord if the man himself could have committed the sin that led to his blindness. Given the fact that the man has been blind from birth, we are confronted with a provocative question. When could he have made such transgressions as to make him blind at birth? The only conceivable answer is in some prenatal state. The question as posed by the disciples explicitly presupposes prenatal existence. It will also be noted that Christ says nothing to dispel or correct the presupposition. Here is incontrovertible support for a doctrine of human preexistence [in the Bible]....It is perfectly reasonable to surmise on the basis of this episode that Jesus and his followers accepted preexistence and thought so little of it that the question of prenatal sin did not even call for an answer....We have here an explicit statement of prenatal existence with all its implications for karma and reincarnation." *(Publisher's Note)*

The mass karma of the time and clime of Jesus subjected newborns to various illnesses and deformities, and the blind man's birth under those conditions, in general determined by his past life actions, was perhaps the natural cause of his defect. But through divine grace, activated by his good karma, he was blessed to receive the healing gift of sight from Jesus "who must work the works of Him that sent me."

When Jesus said, "As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world," he was speaking impersonally of his oneness with Christ Consciousness, the light of divine intelligence that guides the cosmos.* His words about doing God's work "while it is day" because "the night cometh, when no man can work" must also be considered from the point of view of his cosmic Christ Consciousness. In this connection Jesus intimated two meanings—one personal, the other universal. The first—an allusion to the short span that his individual incarnation of divinity would remain on the earth plane—may be fully grasped only by understanding the broader metaphysical significance of his words, as follows:

"While it is day": the cosmic cycles of creation and dissolution

In the universal sense, "day" means the period during which Spirit manifests creation, and "night" signifies the period of cosmic dissolution, during which naught exists but Unmanifested Absolute Spirit—alone, undifferentiated, adorned with no tremor of creative vibratory activity ("work").† As long as vibratory creation exists, throughout the long cyclic span of universal manifestation, God exists as the Father (the transcendent Creator), the Son (Christ Consciousness, the reflected Intelligence of the Father omnipresent within creation), and

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* See commentary on John 8:12, "I am the light of the world," Discourse 51.

† The Bhagavad Gita states: "The *Aum* that causes the birth and sustenance and dissolution of beings and their various natures is termed Karma (cosmic action)....They are true knowers of 'day' and 'night' who understand the Day of Brahma, which endures for a thousand cycles (*yugas*), and the Night of Brahma, which also endures for a thousand cycles. At the dawn of Brahma's Day all creation, reborn, emerges from the state of nonmanifestation; at the dusk of Brahma's Night all creation sinks into the sleep of nonmanifestation" (VIII:3, 17–18).

"By revivifying *Prakriti* (*Aum*, Cosmic Creative Vibration), Mine own emanation, again and again I produce this host of creatures, all subject to the finite laws of Nature....It is solely My impregnating presence that causes Mother Nature to give birth to the animate and the inanimate. Because of Me (through Prakriti) the worlds revolve in alternating cycles (of creation and dissolution)" (IX:8, 10).

These cycles or *yugas* are discussed in more detail in the commentary on these Gita verses in *God Talks With Arjuna.*

Holy Ghost (Cosmic Vibration, maker and substance of every manifestation in creation). By periodic universal dissolution (*mahapralaya*, complete cosmic dissolution, greater than Noah's Flood, which was only partial dissolution, *khanda pralaya*), God withdraws the Holy Vibration, dissolving all creation; then automatically God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are resolved into the one Unmanifested Absolute Spirit, there to remain absorbed until the dawn of the next "day" or cycle of manifested creation.*

Thus Jesus signified: "While it is day (that is, so long as all creation is in manifestation), the Christ Intelligence must carry on the work of maintaining order in creation, shepherding it and all beings within it to an ever greater harmony and ultimate perfection. But when the night or cosmic dissolution of all creation arrives, the reflected Christ Consciousness, devoid of the vibratory receptacle in which it is reflected, will be withdrawn in the transcendental God the Father, even as a moonèd reflection becomes united with the skyey moon at the removal of a mirror. The Christ Consciousness will then have nothing to work through, owing to the dissolution of all creation in God. But so long as the world or cosmic creation exists, so long the Christ Consciousness throughout the universe and in me shall remain as its guiding light, its intelligent principle."

In addition to conveying these cosmic truths applicable to the universal Christ Consciousness, Jesus' mention of "day" and "night" were also a personal reference hinting at the brevity of his physical incarnation. Relative to the individual soul, "night" or dissolution refers to the dissolving of delusive material body consciousness, which also may be either partial or complete—unconsciously through sleep (partial dis-

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* Cosmic dissolution may be only partial and temporary or complete and for a long time. In the partial temporary dissolution, portions only of matter and worlds are disintegrated; but in complete dissolution the entire system of universes, all stars and planets, all beings, are dissolved in Spirit. But the dissolving of all creation in a permanent end of manifestation is impossible until all souls are free from mortal desires and thus become fully liberated in God. To provide ample accommodation for the slow evolutionary return of an infinite family of souls to their Maker, God keeps spinning the alternating cycles of manifestation (day) and dissolution (night), spanning aeons as reckoned on the small scale of a solar system calendar. In the night, God gives all unredeemed souls, as well as Himself! a long cosmic rest, after which the Holy Ghost, *Aum* Vibration, has to create anew the entire universe at the behest of God the Father. Because of the endless desires of creatures, their universe, fashioned after their own longings, is endlessly re-created for their folly and ultimate divine schooling.

solution) or death (complete dissolution); and consciously through spiritual transcendence in the lesser or greater forms of *samadhi.**

Jesus therefore implied that the "day"—the period of manifestation of his mortal body as a receptacle for the infinite Christ Consciousness—would last only for a little while and that he must utilize all his opportunity on earth to do the works of God. When "the night cometh"—when his earthly form and Christ Consciousness would be dissolved in Spirit in the great nocturnal state of complete liberation in Cosmic Consciousness—he would not be readily manifest to the afflicted people of this earth.† That is why, while his body was yet present in the world, Jesus wanted to do all the good he could to establish his mission of divine love and lifting souls into God's presence through Christ Consciousness.

When he had thus spoken, he spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and he anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay, and said unto him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam," (which is by interpretation, Sent). He went his way therefore, and washed, and came seeing (John 9:6–7).

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* Paramahansa Yogananda wrote in a letter to his highly advanced disciple Rajarsi Janakananda: "There are two individual dissolutions or 'floods.' First the partial dissolution of sleep and second, the bigger dissolution of death. (1) The partial dissolution of sleep every day dissolves the daily picture of life; unconsciously, the soul realizes its invisible blessed nature. (2) Death is a bigger dissolution in which the soul first finds out that the body is only a shadow, a picture played on the screen of the cosmic cinema house. Both of those above processes are unconsciously imposed upon man. Therefore yogis learn to produce partial dissolution and the bigger dissolution consciously by *pranayama,* switching off the life force from the sensory and motor nerves (as in sleep), and further switching off the life force from the sensory and motor nerves, muscles, lungs, heart, spinal cord, seven plexuses, etc. In order to destroy the false reality of the body and its surroundings, and to behold this body and world as pictures, and to understand the invisibility and real nature of the soul, the yogi must be able to produce the partial dissolution—Sanskrit *khanda* (partial) *pralaya* (dissolution) and *mahapralaya* (bigger dissolution) at will....

"Please practise these two states—of sensory-motor *samadhi* with heartbeat and sensory-motor relaxation *samadhi* without heartbeat—and you will know this universe as God's cosmic cinema house."

† "Yet a little while am I with you, and then I go unto Him that sent me. Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me: and where I am, thither ye cannot come" (John 7:33–34; see Discourse 50).

Jesus needed neither the clay nor the waters of the pool of Siloam to accomplish this cure. He directed the blind man's attention to these physical intermediaries to stimulate and focus the man's faith, thus rousing a greater receptivity to the real, invisible healing force, which he imparted to the man and with which he charged the clay through his spittle.* Afterward he sent the man to wash in the pool of Siloam, whose waters were considered holy; all places of pilgrimage wherein many people gather and concentrate on thoughts of God possess divine vibrations and also help to create faith in persons desirous of healing.† Jesus was sure of the seed of healing power he would transmit to the blind man, but he was not sure of the fertility of the man's soil of faith. That is why he engaged in the outward ritual of creating the clay ointment and asking the man to wash his anointed eyes in the purifying waters, whereupon the healing became evident.

The neighbours therefore, and they which before had seen him that he was blind, said, "Is not this he that sat and begged?" Some said, "This is he": others said, "He is like him": but he said, "I am he." Therefore said they unto him, "How were thine eyes opened?" He answered and said, "A man that is called Jesus made clay, and anointed mine eyes, and said unto me, 'Go to the pool of Siloam, and wash': and I went and washed, and I received sight."

Then said they unto him, "Where is he?" He said, "I know not." They brought to the Pharisees him that aforetime was blind. And it was the Sabbath day when Jesus made the clay, and opened his eyes. Then again the Pharisees also asked him how he had received his sight. He said unto them, "He put clay upon mine eyes, and I washed, and do see."

Therefore said some of the Pharisees, "This man is not of God, because he keepeth not the Sabbath day." Others said,

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* Cf. Mark 7:31–37 (see Discourse 44).

† The pool of Siloam was located inside the walls of Jerusalem, fed by a conduit that channeled water from a spring outside the city. To this pool, Bible commentator John Gill wrote, "the Jews went at the feast of tabernacles, and drew water with great rejoicing, and brought it, and poured it on the altar; the waters thereof also the priests drank for digestion, when they had eaten too much flesh; and this was likewise made use of to wash in, in case of uncleanness."

"How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles?" And there was a division among them.

They say unto the blind man again, "What sayest thou of him, that he hath opened thine eyes?" He said, "He is a prophet." But the Jews did not believe concerning him, that he had been blind, and received his sight, until they called the parents of him that had received his sight. And they asked them, saying, "Is this your son, who ye say was born blind? How then doth he now see?" His parents answered them and said, "We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind: But by what means he now seeth, we know not; or who hath opened his eyes, we know not: he is of age; ask him: he shall speak for himself."

These words spake his parents, because they feared the Jews: for the Jews had agreed already, that if any man did confess that he was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue. Therefore said his parents, "He is of age; ask him." Then again called they the man that was blind, and said unto him, "Give God the praise: we know that this man is a sinner." He answered and said, "Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see." Then said they to him again, "What did he to thee? How opened he thine eyes?"

He answered them, "I have told you already, and ye did not hear: wherefore would ye hear it again? Will ye also be his disciples?" Then they reviled him, and said, "Thou art his disciple; but we are Moses' disciples. We know that God spake unto Moses: as for this fellow, we know not from whence he is."

The man answered and said unto them, "Why herein is a marvellous thing, that ye know not from whence he is, and yet he hath opened mine eyes. Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth His will, him He heareth. Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind. If this man were not of God, he could do nothing." They answered and said unto him, "Thou wast altogether born in sins, and dost thou teach us?" And they cast him out.

Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when he had found him, he said unto him, "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" (John 9:8–35).

"Dost thou believe in the Christ Consciousness which is the only begotten reflection, or Son, emanating from God the Father?"

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He answered and said, "Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him?"

And Jesus said unto him, "Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee."

And he said, "Lord, I believe." And he worshipped him (John 9:36–38).

"Thou hast seen the body in which is encased the Christ Consciousness. It is the Christ Consciousness, the Son of God, who is behind the speech of the man called Jesus."

The above words reflect the natural humbleness of Jesus. He never spoke of his ego as the Christ; he obliquely referred to the Christ Consciousness as the reflection of God within him.

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And Jesus said, "For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind" (John 9:39).

"I am the Christ Consciousness omnipresent in the cosmos to give it the judgment of cosmic law to guide it intelligently.* Also, the same Christ Consciousness is manifest in my body that I may give discriminating wisdom to those who, though spiritually ignorant, yet confess their unknowing and try their utmost to perceive truth. The wisdom manifest in my life will help to open the eyes of those who think they know truth but are blinded by ignorance. By my wisdom the humble, spiritually blind aspirant will see truth; and the light of my wisdom will reveal the blindness of worldly-wise, spiritually ignorant persons who think they see truth and do not."

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* By "judgment" is meant divine cosmic intelligence, not a process of condemnation as is interpreted by dogmatists. See also commentary on John 5:22 (Discourse 21), "For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son," and succeeding verses in that Discourse.

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And some of the Pharisees which were with him heard these words, and said unto him, "Are we blind also?"

Jesus said unto them, "If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, 'We see'; therefore your sin remaineth" (John 9:40–41).

66 If you acknowledged your spiritually blind mentalities, you would be helped by me to be free from the sin of ignorance; but as you arrogantly say 'We see,' while you do not perceive truth, sin yet abides with you."

Jesus points out that those who try to heal their spiritual blindness with the help of a true guru will be cured of their sightless ignorance. But those who stubbornly persist in their beclouded spiritual vision will remain in their self-perpetuated dark delusions.

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"Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice. And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers."

This parable spake Jesus unto them: but they understood not what things they were which he spake unto them (John 10:1–6).

Jesus here again cites false prophets and charlatans who claim empowerment to bestow enlightenment and liberation, but offer only self-fancied ways that have no foundation in truth or the backing of the will of God. Jesus decries those who confound seekers with untruths, themselves lacking in God-communion or in attunement with the wisdom teachings of a God-recognised spiritual emissary. His analogy of "the shepherd" and "the door" alludes to his own Christ Consciousness and God-realization as meeting the criterion of one qualified for

ordination by God as a *satguru* (supreme channel of God's blessing and guidance) and as a *jagadguru* (a God-knowing emissary with a world-wide mission of saving souls):

Distinguishing true shepherds of souls from false prophets

"With the assurance of the intuitive truth that I feel within me, I declare unto you that any so-called spiritual teacher who has not taken his consciousness through the inner door of realization into Christ Consciousness and Cosmic Consciousness cannot be considered a real shepherd of souls, a saviour, able to guide devotees to the kingdom of God. The spiritual leader who ascends to his position 'by some other way' (pretension, false personality, animal magnetism, assumed spirituality, and insincere oratory devoid of Self-realization to attract to himself the attention of the sheepfold of sincere truth-seekers) is a metaphysical 'thief and robber' who by egregious misrepresentations steals for himself the devotion of seekers, which rightfully belongs only to God.

"Unlike the false teacher who feeds his ego with the purloined adoration of his followers, the true spiritual shepherd—a God-knowing master, or guru—is a clear, pure channel, unobstructed by ego, relaying to God all the devotion of his disciples.

"To the true guru-shepherd, the Heavenly Porter opens the door to all divine secrecies, through which the guru leads his obedient, truth-seeking, meek, lamblike followers.

"Devotees whose souls are consciously drawn to the guru and who remain in tune with his vibrations ('voice') are successful in following his leadership. In divine attunement with their guru, they intuitively feel his vibrations as they try to adhere to his guidance and emulate his spiritual example. When the spiritual teacher leads the consciousness of his devotees toward God in meditation, he himself goes ahead of them in deep ecstasy, calling them toward Cosmic Consciousness through the Holy Ghost vibration in his Christ Consciousness. Earnest devotees, meditating with their ecstasy-tuned guru or in spiritual attunement with him through practice of the methods he has taught them, gradually learn to follow his consciousness to liberation in Cosmic Consciousness.

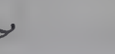
"True devotees will not follow 'a stranger'—a so-called teacher not recognised as such by God. They will avoid self-elected spiritual guides, feeling no attunement with those who are lacking in divine realization and appointment by God."

Jesus reiterates that true spiritual teachers and true devotees are brought together by God, in contradistinction to the unspiritual ma-

terial means used by self-elected lecturers for gathering a host of followers. Jesus had said before: "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him."* Therefore, it is evident according to Jesus that true devotees are not attracted to false teachers, however popular they may be.

When a devotee prays intensely to God to know truth, God sends him a true guru to guide him. This divine grace comes to the devotee when he demonstrates his desire for liberation by sincere constancy in supplication to God. If the devotee is persistent in his prayer and in faith, God will surely respond by sending that soul a true guru through whose wisdom teachings and vibrations of God-consciousness the Divine Porter will open for the devotee the inner door of salvation. The guru bestows spiritual baptism on the devotee, by which God unlocks the entryway of the spiritual eye through which the devotee follows the "voice" (the Holy Ghost vibration) of the shepherd of Christ Consciousness to the Cosmic Consciousness of God.†

Only a true guru is empowered by God to establish with disciples a divine relationship by which he leads those in his care out of the common sheepfold of delusion to freedom in the Elysian pastures of God-consciousness.



Then said Jesus unto them again, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep. All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture. The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John 10:7–10).

66 In truth, I declare unto you that the Christ Consciousness in me, and in all other liberated souls, is the only door through which devotees can enter into Cosmic Consciousness.‡ That realization iden-

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* John 6:44 (see Discourse 43).

† See Discourses 9 and 13.

‡ "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6; see Discourse 70).

tifies every truly great teacher; but those so-called spiritual teachers 'who ever came before me'—that is, who exalt their ego and personality to attract devotees before they have attained any realization of Christ Consciousness—are metaphysical thieves and robbers stealing for themselves the devotees' devotion meant for God. But those who thus elevated themselves, eclipsing with egotistical human consciousness the Christ Consciousness in their souls, could not get true devotees ('the sheep') to listen to their empty rhetoric.

"I am the door": Christ Consciousness is the only portal to liberation

"Christ Consciousness is the door; if any devotee by meditation enters in—that is, realizes the Christ Consciousness in me also present in his own soul—he shall be saved. He will have the privilege of consciously going 'in and out' through the pranic star door in the spiritual eye, of escaping eternally from the misery of reincarnations into the absolute freedom of Cosmic Consciousness, or of willingly returning to the world to help mankind. He will find the pasture of eternal happiness.

"The universal thief is ignorance (*maya,* delusion), which has come into the world solely to steal man's consciousness from God, and to make him a mortal through the experience of death, and to destroy with misapprehension his divine inheritance of soul wisdom and joy. False teachers, themselves victimized by delusion, partner in this thievery. They do not know God and therefore cannot impart His consciousness to others; rather, in their ignorance they not only destroy their own potential wisdom, but that of their hapless followers as well. The Christ Consciousness, omnipresent in the world, has appeared in my body that true seekers may have evidence that in the Infinite Christ they will find Eternal Life and its divine abundance."

When Jesus said, "All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them," he certainly did not mean that Abraham, Moses, Elijah, Buddha, John the Baptist, and other great masters who came before him were all thieves and robbers. It is a regrettable theological misunderstanding to think that Jesus meant to discredit all prophets and masters who preceded his coming into the world. The divine incarnations of Bhagavan Krishna and Gautama Buddha, born centuries before the time of Jesus, brought complete spiritual liberation to many disciples, and continue to work their works of redemption. Elijah, who came long before Jesus, was another true shepherd of souls, including that of Elisha who was Jesus in a former incarnation. There-

fore, Jesus would never have spoken disparagingly of these and other great prophets and seers who lived prior to his time on earth.

"I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. The hireling fleeth: because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep. I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep" (John 10:11–15).

"The Christ Consciousness in me is the receptacle of all goodness and the shepherd of true seekers, able to guide deeply meditating devotees to Cosmic Consciousness. The spiritual shepherd, a true guru attuned to Christ Consciousness, transmits his eternal life to his receptive, humble disciples and is ready to sacrifice himself as necessary for their salvation.

"The Good Shepherd": a true guru attuned to Christ Consciousness

"But 'he that is an hireling'—the professional religionist who teaches only to make a living—has no power as does the shepherd ordained by God to spiritually protect in the fold of Christ Consciousness those seekers in his care. Feeling no real commitment, as in the God-bonded relationship between a guru-shepherd and his sheep, the hireling flies away in helplessness (feeling no great responsibility) when the flock is attacked by the wolf of ignorance and of material and spiritual difficulties. Unprotected, the followers are caught by the wolf and scattered in the realm of delusion; with no shepherd to lead them to pastures of liberation, they may wander through many trackless incarnations.

"The Christ Consciousness in me recognises true spiritual seekers sent to me to shepherd, and the true seekers recognise the Spirit in me. The Father, Cosmic Consciousness, knows the Christ Consciousness in me and the Christ Consciousness in me knows the Cosmic Consciousness. The Christ Consciousness has come in me to offer through the sacrifice of my life its eternal life for the liberation of my sheepfold of true devotees."

"And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.

"Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father" (John 10:16–18).

Jesus starkly differentiated himself from ordinary teachers when he declared that he was able to take care of the spiritual progress of souls not only during one life on earth but in their after-death state and future incarnations. Being empowered by God and the ever-living spirit of a true guru-shepherd, a saviour, he could say: "There are other souls whom I know from past incarnations, but who do not belong to the fold or group of disciples of this life. Them also, as well as other souls God will send to me in times to come, I must bring through my voice, Cosmic Vibration, to the Heavenly Father, Cosmic Consciousness. All devotees who aspire toward liberation belong to the one fold of truth, and they shall have one shepherd, the Christ Consciousness.

"The Heavenly Father loves me because I serve His devotees with eternal life through the body called Jesus and also after that body will be taken away from the earth. No human being can destroy the eternal life in my Christ Consciousness or even the life in my body except that I am voluntarily surrendering my bodily life for the service of all. The Heavenly Father has given me the power to surrender the life in the body called Jesus and also to resurrect it after death. I received this commandment and power from my Heavenly Father."

There was a division therefore again among the Jews for these sayings. And many of them said, "He hath a devil, and is mad; why hear ye him?" Others said, "These are not the words of him that hath a devil. Can a devil open the eyes of the blind?"

And it was at Jerusalem the feast of the dedication, and it was winter. And Jesus walked in the temple in Solomon's porch. Then came the Jews round about him, and said unto him, "How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly."*

Jesus answered them, "I told you, and ye believed not: the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me. But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one" (John 10:19–30).

66 I told you who I am and you believed me not. The miraculous works of healing bodies and souls that I have performed in the name of my Heavenly Father bear testimony to the Christ Consciousness in me. But you do not believe in me because you lack the devotion and awakened consciousness of my disciples who, by meditation, hear my voice of Cosmic Vibration and feel the Christ Consciousness within them. Likewise, the Christ Consciousness in me is ever in tune with my true devotees who strictly follow me.

"I and my Father are one"

"When my devotees fully contact the Christ Consciousness in me, they will never experience death as a fearsome sense of finality, as do ordinary humans, but will recognise the eternal life within their souls. Neither shall any man, nor any material desire, be able to pluck them away from my Christ Consciousness ('my hand') when they are once established therein by continuous deep meditation and ecstasy.

"My Father, the Cosmic Consciousness, who emanated the Christ Consciousness and manifested it in me—and as felt by all deep devotees—is greater than the sum of everything He has made. Once devotees reach through Christ Consciousness the domain of Cosmic Consciousness ('my Father's hand'), they cannot be compelled to reincarnate on earth through the power or enticement of any possible material desires of past incarnations.

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* I.e., Hanukkah, the "festival of lights" commemorating the rededication of the temple in 164 B.C.

"As the Christ Consciousness present in my body and omnipresent in vibratory creation is one with transcendent Cosmic Consciousness, I have truly told you, I and my Father are one."

Bhagavan Krishna similarly spoke of his Universal Consciousness (*Kutastha Chaitanya*) as one with the transcendental Absolute when he declared: "For I am the basis of the Infinite, the Immortal, the Indestructible; and of eternal Dharma and unalloyed Bliss."*

When Jesus said, "Ye are not of my sheep," he meant that the persons who doubted and opposed him had not merited the divine grace to be redeemed at that time through Jesus. Here, as again and again, Jesus emphasizes that no one finds God until he has become a true seeker and is drawn by God to a God-ordained guru qualified to serve as his saviour.

Then the Jews took up stones again to stone him. Jesus answered them, "Many good works have I shewed you from my Father; for which of those works do ye stone me?"

The Jews answered him, saying, "For a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God."

Jesus answered them, "Is it not written in your law, 'I said, "Ye are gods"'? If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken; say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, 'Thou blasphemest'; because I said, 'I am the Son of God'? If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works: that ye may know, and believe, that the Father is in me, and I in Him" (John 10:31–38).

66 Is it not written in your holy books exactly what I said—that not only I but all of you are gods?† If the scriptures call all people gods because they are born of the Cosmic Vibration emanating from God the Father, that truth cannot be nullified by your disbelief. Then how can you speak of blasphemy to me who have been sanctified and sent by God to the world as a perfect godly example?

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* *God Talks With Arjuna: The Bhagavad Gita* XIV:27.

† "I have said, 'Ye are gods; and all of you are children of the most High'" (Psalms 82:6).

"Because I truthfully made a statement that Christ Consciousness in me is the Son, or the only reflection, of God the Father, you grievously err in concluding that I indulge in blasphemy. If I do not manifest the divine actions as inspired by the Cosmic Consciousness reflected in my Christ Consciousness, then do not believe me. But if I do the works as inspired by Cosmic Consciousness, then notwithstanding your disbelief in me, believe at least in the Divine manifested in my works. By focusing your belief on the divine work I do, it is quite possible that you may thereby know that 'the Father is in me, and I in Him'—that Cosmic Consciousness is reflected in the Christ Consciousness within me and that my Christ Consciousness is eternally one with Cosmic Consciousness."

"Ye are gods": All souls are made in the pure divine image

When Jesus quotes the scripture that "ye are gods," he signifies that all souls are made in the pure image of God, the Father. If one hundred people are basking under the sun, ten with their eyes wide open and ninety with their eyes closed, all are revealed by the sun. But the ninety who have their eyes closed see neither the sun nor themselves as do the ten whose eyes are open. Similarly, souls with open eyes of wisdom behold themselves as emanations of God, while others, even though they too are "children of the most High," do not realize it because their eyes of wisdom are closed. Thus, although the scripture says of all humans "ye are gods," there is a difference of perception among them according to the degree of their Self-realization.

Jesus, who had fully realized Spirit as manifested within him, did not speak of his human nature as God, so there was no blasphemy in his saying, "I and my Father are one." Persons identified with their human egoity lack that realization; even though they are potential gods, they have no actual perception of the presence of God within themselves. Jesus never said: "I am God," but by his divine works he manifested the realization that his consciousness, having emanated from God, was one with Him.

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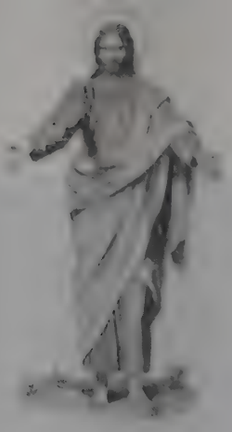
Therefore they sought again to take him: but he escaped out of their hand, and went away again beyond Jordan into the place where John at first baptized; and there he abode.

And many resorted unto him, and said, "John did no miracle: but all things that John spake of this man were true." And many believed on him there (John 10:39–42).



DISCOURSE 53

Fulfilling the Two Greatest Commandments

Why Love for God Is the Preeminent Cosmic Law for Soul Liberation

❖

"With All Thy Strength": Interiorization of Life Energy Through Pranayama

❖

Expansion of Love for All Beings by Seeing God in Everyone

❖

Love for God, and for God in All, Is the Essence of Spiritual Law for Man's Salvation

❖

The Good Samaritan: Understanding One's Duty to Serve and Give Aid to Others

❖

Mary and Martha: Balancing Material Duties With Devotional Communion

"There is an inner meaning to the exhortation to love God with all one's heart, mind, soul, and strength. Jesus used these simple scriptural terms, but projected his understanding that in them is the whole science of yoga, the transcendental way of divine union through meditation."

***And, behold, a certain lawyer** stood up, and tempted him, saying, "Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"*

He said unto him, "What is written in the law? How readest thou?"

And he answering said, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself."

And he said unto him, "Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live."

But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, "And who is my neighbour?"

And Jesus answering said, "A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, and went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, 'Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee.' Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves?"

And he said, "He that shewed mercy on him."

Then said Jesus unto him, "Go, and do thou likewise."

Now it came to pass, as they went, that he entered into a certain village: and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his word. But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to him, and said,

"Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? Bid her therefore that she help me."

And Jesus answered and said unto her, "Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her."

—Luke 10:25–42

DISCOURSE 53

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And he said unto him, "Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live" (Luke 10:25–28).

*Parallel references:**

Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked him a question, tempting him, and saying, "Master, which is the great commandment in the law?"

Jesus said unto him, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is

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* Jesus' declaration of the two greatest commandments is recounted in all three synoptic Gospels, with minor variations. In the Gospels According to St. Matthew and St. Mark it occurs during Jesus' last week in Jerusalem, shortly before his crucifixion; in the Gospel According to St. Luke it appears earlier. In this Discourse all three versions are commented on together, but the chronology used is that found in Luke, in which it is followed by the parable of the Good Samaritan and the story of Mary and Martha (not related in any of the other Gospels).

the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets" (Matthew 22:35–40).

* * *

And one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, and perceiving that he had answered them well, asked him, "Which is the first commandment of them all?"

*And Jesus answered him, "The first of all the commandments is, 'Hear, O Israel; the Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength': this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.' There is none other commandment greater than these."**

And the scribe said unto him, "Well, Master, thou hast said the truth: for there is one God; and there is none other but He: And to love Him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbour as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices."

And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, he said unto him, "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God." And no man after that durst ask him any question (Mark 12:28–34).

The whole purpose of religion—indeed, of life itself—is encapsulated in the two paramount commandments cited by Lord Jesus in these verses. In them lies the essence of eternal truth distinguishing all bona-fide spiritual paths, the irreducible imperative that man must embrace as an individualized soul separated from God if he would reclaim the realization of oneness with his Maker.

"This do, and thou shalt live," Jesus told the lawyer who had asked how to obtain eternal life. That is: "If you can love God wholly in actual communion in daily meditation, and show by your actions your love for your neighbour (your divine brother) even as you love

* Here Jesus is quoting from the Hebrew law set forth by Moses: Deuteronomy 6:4–5 and Leviticus 19:18.

yourself, you will rise above the mortal consciousness of this delusive plane of life and death and realize the eternal changeless Spirit existing within yourself and in Its everywhereness."

"On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets," proclaimed Jesus to the lawyer mentioned in Matthew.* And to the scribe in Mark who asked which divine commandment was preeminent, Jesus answered: "The Cosmic Sovereign and our Protector, our one God, is the sole Lord and Master of all creation. He created you as one of His children, made in His image and bearing the divine relation ordained by Him. It behooves you to love spontaneously your Creator with the love He implanted in you—with all the divine love in your heart, with all the intuitive perception of your soul, with all the attention of your mind, and with all the strength of your mental determination and physical energy."

Why love for God is the preeminent cosmic law for soul liberation

This, Jesus declared, is the foremost of all cosmic laws ordained by the Spirit for soul upliftment and liberation; for through the portal of man's love God enters into oneness with him, a union that liberates him from the bondage of delusion. To love God supremely is to receive from Him eternal contentment and fulfilment, with freedom from all human desires that irresponsibly provoke continuous births and deaths with their unforeseen miseries.

Jesus praised the understanding demonstrated by the scribe, and assured him that he was near to attaining a high degree of spiritual consciousness, because this man realized that to love God in His su-

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* Jesus' words "the law and the prophets" here and in other statements (e.g., Matthew 5:17; see Discourse 27) made reference to the canon of Hebrew scripture—the Torah (five books of Moses setting forth the doctrinal laws of Judaism) and the books containing the works of the great Hebrew prophets, consisting of Joshua, Judges, I and II Samuel, I and II Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the twelve "minor prophets" (so called because of the brevity of these books): Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.

Thomas Cahill, in *The Gifts of the Jews* (New York: Anchor Books, 1998), writes: "The books of the Hebrew Bible are divided into three sections, Torah [the Law], Neviim [the Prophets], and Ketuvim [the Writings], the initial letters of which form the acronym *Tanak*, the word by which the Bible is known in Jewish tradition....Torah or Teaching (sometimes translated Law) is also called the Pentateuch, that is, the Five Books: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy....The Torah is unquestionably *the* scripture of Jewish tradition, though the oft-repeated phrase 'the Torah (or the Law) and the Prophets' alerts us that these two parts of scripture are viewed as virtually inseparable." *(Publisher's Note)*

premacy and in His innate intimacy in all beings is "more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices." To worship the Creator through outward religious formalities is to maintain a separateness between the worshipper and Worshipped; but to love Him is to become His friend, His son, and one with Him.*

For God to command that man love Him above everything else might seem unbecoming of an all-powerful Deity. But all avatars and saints have known in their hearts that this is not to appease some quixotic whim of God, but is rather a necessity through which the individualized soul can make a conscious connection with its Source. God can live without man's love; but as the wave cannot live without the ocean, so it is not possible for man to exist without the love of God. The thirst for love in every human heart is because man is made in God's image of love. So the avatars and saints call upon mankind to love God, not because of compulsion or commandment, but because the ocean of His love surges behind the little wave of love in every heart.

A great saint of India† said: "He is the cleverest who wholeheartedly seeks God first"; for in finding Him, he receives, along with Him, everything that is of God. To love God is to contact creation's Munificent Provenance. Many a worldly man foolishly engages his heart, mind, soul, and physical strength in the pursuit of money or human love or earthly power, only to lose them—if perchance he had found them—at the time of death. The wisest use of life is to invest it in seeking God, the one treasure that satisfies forever and can never be lost or diminished.

Experience of God in meditation automatically brings love for Him

Though one must love God in order to know Him, it is equally true that one must know God in order to love Him. No one can love anything of which he is entirely ignorant; no one can love a person who is completely unknown to him. But those who meditate deeply do "know," because they find proof of the existence of God as

* "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?

"He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" (Micah 6:6–8).

† Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa.

the ever new Joy felt in meditation, or the Cosmic Sound of *Aum* (Amen) heard in deep silence, or the Cosmic Love experienced while concentrating devotion in the heart, or the Cosmic Wisdom that dawns as inner enlightenment, or the Cosmic Light evoking visions of Infinity, or the Cosmic Life felt during meditation when the little life is joined to the greater Life in everything.

Any devotee who even once has sensed God as any one of His tangible manifestations in meditation cannot help but love Him when thus touched by His thrilling qualities. Most people never really love God because they little know how lovable the Lord is when He visits the heart of the meditating devotee. This actual contact of the transcendental presence of God is possible to determined devotees who persist in meditation and continuous soulful prayers.

There is but one Originator of all capabilities of man: God is the Creator of our love with which we love, of our souls with which we claim immortality, of our minds and mental processes with which we think and reason and accomplish, of our vitality with which we engage in the activities of life. We should use all these gifts in a supreme energetic effort in meditation to express our love to God until we feel consciously His responding manifestation.

The average religionist rationalizes the fulfilment of his spiritual obligation through absentminded prayers or mechanical rituals, or circuitous wanderings in the forest of theology and dogma. He may attempt to feel love and devotion for God in his heart, and to put his mind on God as best he can during times of prayer; and he may try to love God "with all his strength" by vigourously singing, dancing, or even rolling on the ground as do some sects of "Holy Rollers." When it comes to loving God with all his soul he is at a loss, as he does not even know what the soul is. The only time he knows something of his soul (and then only in an unconscious way) is in deep, dreamless sleep. In that state, the "strength" or life energy is switched off from the five senses and withdrawn inward; the consciousness of oneself as a physical being is gone. At night human beings have a glimpse of their real Self, the soul; each morning upon awakening the majority again take up their mistaken identity as a mortal man or woman.

Not theology but scientific yoga provides the means to fulfil the first commandment

Outward attempts to apply Jesus' teaching usually yield only minimal external satisfaction, not God-realization. But there is an inner

meaning to the exhortation to love God with all one's heart, mind, soul, and strength. Jesus used these simple scriptural terms, but projected his understanding that in them is the whole science of yoga, the transcendental way of divine union through meditation. In India, where spiritual understanding had developed for thousands of years before the time of Jesus, God-knowing sages elaborated these concepts as a comprehensive spiritual philosophy to guide devotees systematically on the path to liberation. When a person makes the effort in meditation to know God, using the sincerity of his heart and deepest feelings, and the intuition of his soul, and all the powers of concentration of his mind, and all his interiorized life energy, or strength, he will surely succeed.

That system of spiritual culture whereby one learns to "love God with all your heart" is known in India as *Bhakti Yoga*—union with God through unconditional love and devotion. The *bhakta* realizes that whatever is in a person's heart, that is where his concentration is—on the thing he loves. As the lover's heart is on the beloved and the drunkard's is on his drink, so the devotee's heart is continuously absorbed in love for his Divine Beloved.

To "love God with all your mind" means with focused concentration. India has specialized in the science of concentrating the mind one-pointedly through definite techniques, so that during the time of worship the devotee is able to keep his whole attention on God. If while offering prayerful devotions the mind is constantly flitting to thoughts of work or food or bodily sensations or other diversions, that is not loving God with all the mind. The Bible teaches: "Pray without ceasing";* India's yoga science gives the actual methodology to worship God with that fully concentrated mind.

To "love God with all your soul" means to enter the state of superconscious ecstasy, direct perception of the soul and its oneness with God. When no thoughts cross the mind, but there is a conscious allknowingness, when one knows through intuitive realization that he can do anything just by so ordering it, then one is in the expanded state of superconsciousness. It is the realization of the soul as the reflection of God, the soul's connection with the consciousness of God. It is a state of exceeding joy: the soul's crystalline perception of the omnipresent Spirit reflected as the joy of meditation.

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*I Thessalonians 5:17.

To love God with all the soul requires the complete stillness of transcendent interiorization. This cannot be achieved while praying aloud, moving the hands this way and that, singing or chanting, or doing anything else that activates the sensory-muscular apparatus of the body. Just as in deep sleep the body and senses become inert, that inner withdrawal is characteristic also of superconscious ecstasy—only ecstasy is much deeper than sleep. Ten million sleeps do not describe the joy of it. That is the state in which one can know the soul, and with that true Self wholly adore Him who is Love Itself.

The fulfilment of the divine command to love God with all one's heart, mind, and soul is made possible by the science that enables the devotee to "love God with all thy strength." Yoga teaches that science. When one sleeps, the conscious mind is inactive; the strength is withdrawn from the sensory-motor apparatus of the brain and from the muscles and nerves and is concentrated in the faculties of the subconscious mind. One cannot go into the sleep state of subconsciousness unless, usually passively, the life force has been switched off from the conscious sensory and motor nervous system; and one cannot go into the superconscious state, transcending the subconsciousness, without consciously switching off the life energy from the senses and muscles.

"With all thy strength": interiorization of life energy through pranayama

The mastery of life energy that enables one to love God with all one's strength begins with posture (*asana,* training the body to maintain with ease and without restlessness the correct posture for motionless meditation) and breathing exercises for life-force control (*pranayama,* techniques to quiet the breath and heart). By such practice, the heart becomes quiet, effectively switching off the energy from the senses and stilling the restless breath that keeps man tied to body consciousness. The yogi is able to focus on God without the intrusive pull of the flesh. The mind, disconnected from sensations, becomes transcendentally interiorized (*pratyahara*). The devotee can then use that free mind in a communion of love for God. When the devotee can love God with an inwardly concentrated mind, he begins to feel that love for God in his heart, exquisitely permeating every nuance of his feelings with the presence of God. The God-saturated heart then feels the Beloved Lord in the deepest recesses of the soul where the little love meets and is enfolded by the Great Love. The feeling of God in the soul expands into realization of God in His everywhereness (the *samyama* of yoga: *dharana, dhyana, samadhi*).

Jesus went very deep in teachings that appear on the surface to be simple—much deeper than most people understand. That he taught the entire yoga system, the scientific method of union with God, is evidenced in the Book of Revelation in the mystery of the seven stars and seven churches with their seven angels and seven golden candlesticks. God-realization is attained by opening the "seven seals" of these centres of spiritual perception to attain mastery over all astral powers of life and death through which the soul ascends to liberation.*

Jesus emphasized that salvation begins with those practices that enable the devotee truly to love God with the supreme offerings of heart, mind, soul, and strength. In India's greatest scripture of yoga, the Bhagavad Gita, the Lord speaks in words that parallel the scriptural commandment cited by Jesus: "Again listen to My supreme word, the most secret of all. Because thou art dearly loved by Me, I will relate what is beneficial to thee. Absorb thy mind in Me; become My devotee; resign all things to Me; bow down to Me. Thou art dear to Me, so in truth do I promise thee: Thou shalt attain Me!"†

The First Commandment leads the devotee into observance of the second great spiritual law, "like unto it." As one strives to feel God within, he has also a duty to share his experience of God with his neighbours: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour (all races and creatures anywhere with whom one comes in contact) as thyself (as you

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* See Discourse 6.

† *God Talks With Arjuna: The Bhagavad Gita* XVIII:64–65. From the commentary: "'Absorb thy mind in Me' signifies absorption in the true 'Myself' [the Spirit, reflected in man as the soul] in ecstasy. 'Become My devotee' signifies perception and remembrance of the blessed 'Myself' during that state of human activity in which the devotee's actions are not performed under the influence of the physical ego. 'Resign all things to Me' signifies dissolving mind and life force and desires in the fire of true perception of the inner 'Myself.' 'Bow down to Me' has a very deep meaning. The act of bowing consists in placing the hands, palms pressed together, over the heart, then touching the fingertips to the forehead to express devotion to a person or to God. Hands symbolize activity, the heart symbolizes love, and the head symbolizes wisdom. So a person bowing to man or God symbolizes by this act of obeisance: 'My activity, my love, and my mind are at Your service.'

"In this stanza the Lord asks Arjuna to dissolve his heart's love, his impulse to physical activity, and his discriminating thoughts in the inner 'Myself' by repeatedly concentrating his attention therein, even though the mind wants to run away and to be engrossed in physical or emotional activities on the plane of the senses.

"The Lord further intimates to Arjuna: 'You have endeared yourself to Me. I truly promise you that if you become absorbed in your inner "Myself," you will know it is none other than the great Myself pervading everywhere.'"

love your own soul)—because you see God in everyone." Man's neighbour is the manifestation of his greater Self or God. The soul is a reflection of Spirit, a reflection that is in every being and in the vibratory life of all animate and inanimate cosmic decor. To love parents, relatives, associates, countrymen, all races of the earth, all creatures, flowers, stars, which live in the "neighbourhood" or range of one's consciousness is to love God in His multifarious tangible manifestations. Those persons yet unable to love God as His subtle expressions in meditation can nurture their love for Him as manifested in nature and in all beings they contact or sense in any way.

Expansion of love for all beings by seeing God in everyone

It is God who becomes the father to protect the child, the mother to love the child unconditionally, and friends to help that incarnate soul without the limitation of familial instincts. It is God who has become the adorned earth with its canopy of stars to amuse His children with wonder. It is He who has become the food and the breath and the sustaining life functions of the multitude of mortal forms. When God's immanence penetrates man's understanding, it awakens man to his duty and privilege to worship God templed in himself (through meditation), and templed in all beings and things in the universe (through love of his neighbour in the proximity of his cosmic home).

Even saints who love God in transcendental ecstasy in meditation find complete redemption only after they have shared their divine attainment by loving God as manifested in all souls in the omnipresent neighbourhood of their soul.

Encouraged by love for God in meditation, one might best begin soul neighbourliness by reaching out in helpfulness to persons who are outside one's family, yet are nearer than the world at large. Persons instinctively show preference in giving to their families rather than to strangers; and the idea of "the world" itself is a concept far removed and abstract. But when a person lives just for himself and the select few he chooses to favour as his own, he chokes the expansion of his life, and from the spiritual standpoint he does not live at all. On the contrary, when a person extends his sympathy and caring from the "us four and no more" consciousness to his neighbours and to the world, his little life flows into the greater life of God and becomes the Eternal Life—the second requisite in answer to the question put to Christ by the lawyer, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?"

Most people live in narrow walls of selfishness, never feeling the throb of the universal life of God. Anyone who lives without knowing that his life comes from the eternal life, who abides a solely material existence, dies and reincarnates forgetful of past lives, has not really lived. His mortal consciousness wandered through delusive dream experiences, but his true Self, the soul, never awoke to express its godly nature and immortality. By contrast, any devotee who by meditation realizes the eternal life behind his mortal life lives forever, never losing his conscious existence at the time of death, or from one incarnation to another, or in the eternity of soul freedom in God.

Saints and sages who fulfil the two preeminent commandments are no longer subservient to the discipline of other commandments, for in loving God in transcendental meditation and as manifested in others, the righteousness in all cosmic laws is honoured automatically. In the devotee with God-contact, the Framer of Cosmic Law works as a natural intuitive goodness that keeps him always in harmony with the universal codes of God. Millenniums of darkness gathered around the soul may be dispelled gradually by little flames of observance of numerous rules of conduct. But when, by supreme effort of the heart, mind, and strength, the all-pervading light of God visits the soul, then darkness is no more; the advent of the Great Light engulfs the flickering illumination of disciplined actions. Therefore, to love God through continuous prayer and meditation, and to love God through physical, mental, and spiritual service to His manifestations in one's universal family of neighbours, is the support and essence of the entirety of other laws of human conduct and liberated lives.

Love for God, and for God in all, is the essence of spiritual law for man's salvation

Whether one has been righteous or reprehensible, love of God is one's salvation. Each soul should make its rightful claim to God's loving help: "Lord, naughty or good, I am Thy child; You made me in Your image. I may have been naughty, but that is when Your child needs You even more." He is the utmost sinner who turns away from God; he is the utmost sinner who says, "Changing oneself from vice to virtue cannot be done." But he quick becomes a virtuous man, even if scarred with the sins of the world, who says from the sincerity of his heart, "God, I love You." He is safe.

A great lover of God, Saint Mirabai, wrote:

"If by bathing daily God could be realized
Sooner would I be a whale in the deep;
If by eating roots and fruits He could be known
Gladly would I choose the form of a goat;
If the counting of rosaries uncovered Him
I would say my prayers on mammoth beads;
If bowing before stone images unveiled Him
A flinty mountain I would humbly worship;
If by drinking milk the Lord could be imbibed
Many calves and children would know Him;
If abandoning one's wife could summon God
Would not thousands be eunuchs?
Mirabai knows that to find the Divine One
The only indispensable is Love."*

No one can find God without love, for love given freely from the heart of His children is the only thing man's Maker is seeking. He has everything else. The pangs of unrequited love and of separation from loved ones at death are not to torture man, but that he might at last seek the Lover that is waiting for him—a Lover that is not a man or a woman but the great God who has masqueraded before him as father, mother, friend, incarnations of lovers. It is He who is calling you; He who will never abandon you. He came to Saint Anthony, the desert anchorite in Egypt, centuries ago, when the saint was being severely tried and tormented by the devil and his legions of demons in extraordinary attempts to wrest from him his faith. Saint Anthony cried out defiantly: "Satan, do your worst! Nothing will ever separate me from Christ!" The demons attacked; the walls of the cave shook with such ferocity that their collapse and the death of the saint seemed imminent. At the last moment, suddenly the radiant splendour of Christ appeared, and Anthony was safe. He said to the Lord, "Where were you, my Jesus? Why did you not come sooner to assist me?" And the voice out of that Light replied: "Anthony, I was with you all the time."† So never forsake God. The fiercer the tests of life's adversities, the more strongly the devotee clings to Him, even as

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* Mirabai was a medieval Rajputani princess who renounced her royalty and became a renowned devotee of God. She composed many devotional songs that are a treasured part of India's spiritual lore.

† Recounted in *The Saints that Moved the World* by René Fülöp-Miller (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1945).

the child clings more tightly to the mother's skirt when she is scolding him, at last to be gathered in the arms of her unconditional love.

To the devotee who wants God badly enough, He will come. He will free that seeker from all false notions of the dream world He has created. He knows delusion and its temptations are sometimes terrible for His unenlightened children. They are the test of God, but He never tests beyond the capacity of His devotee's endurance and conquering spirit. Even when the devotee thinks he can stand no more, the Lord is ever with him as He was with Saint Anthony, silently strengthening and supporting the devotee's every effort.

When the heart is afire with the longing born of the sorrows of incarnations of separation, the Lord will reveal Himself. And the bliss that engulfs the soul at that meeting, no human tongue can tell. The heart breaks a thousand times—a million times. Saint Teresa was sorely afflicted—ravaged twenty-five years with all kinds of disease, writing in the nighttime shivering in a cold room—but such was her love in communion with Christ that she did not care. One day an angel pierced her heart with a breath of fire—not for cruelty, but to show her that pain could not hurt her anymore; she was above all pain. In that experience her heart became tremendous with the ecstasy and joy of God. She said: "It seemed I couldn't endure it and then suddenly I was filled completely with the great love of God." That is the eternal romance: the little spark of life consumed in a flame of divine love. Many times over the years Teresa beheld her Lord—in form and as formless. The body of Christ became the ocean of Infinite Consciousness, which Teresa felt—the realization of the Christ Consciousness in Jesus, that which declared, "I and my Father are one."*

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* Teresa's experience with the angel is recounted in *The Saints that Moved the World,* by René Fülöp-Miller.

In her autobiography the saint wrote that experiencing Christ without form is a vision "of a higher kind." In this way, she says, "we learn how He is God, is mighty, can do all things, commands all things, governs all things, and fills all things with His love."—*Life of St. Teresa of Jesus,* Chapter XXVIII (New York: Benziger Bros., 1904).

"I was in prayer one day...," she relates in Chapter XXVII, "when I saw Christ close by me, or, to speak more correctly, felt Him; for I saw nothing with the eyes of the body, nothing with the eyes of the soul. He seemed to me to be close beside me; and I saw, too, as I believe, that it was He who was speaking to me....

"I went at once to my confessor....He asked in what form I saw our Lord. I told him I saw no form. He then said: 'How did you know that it was Christ?' I replied, that I did not know how I knew it; but I could not help knowing that He was close

Those unions of love are the real romance. They are eternal. Human romance is an ephemeral fantasy. Romance with God is a true and everlasting joy of the Life of life, the Love of all loves. God has so much love to give to His devotee that it will burst all boundaries of the heart.

When that love of God fills one's being, it embraces everyone in a universal consciousness of love, service, and compassion. As Jesus' great disciple John wrote: "Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love."*

But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, "And who is my neighbour?"

And Jesus answering said, "A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him. And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host,

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beside me—that I saw Him distinctly, and felt His presence; that the recollectedness of my soul was deeper in the prayer of quiet, and more continuous; that the effects thereof were very different from what I had hitherto experienced....

"Afterwards I learnt from Friar Peter of Alcantara, a holy man of great spirituality—of whom I shall speak by and by—and from others of great learning, that this vision was of the highest order, and one with which Satan can least interfere; and therefore there are no words whereby to explain....

"He renders Himself present to the soul by a certain knowledge of Himself which is more clear than the sun. I do not mean that we now see either a sun or any brightness, only that there is a light not seen, which illumines the understanding so that the soul may have the fruition of so great a good. This vision brings with it great blessings."

See also Discourse 69, page 1348. *(Publisher's Note)*

* First Epistle of St. John, 4:7–8.

and said unto him, 'Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee.' Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves?"

And he said, "He that shewed mercy on him."

Then said Jesus unto him, "Go, and do thou likewise" (Luke 10:29–37).

The Good Samaritan: understanding one's duty to serve and give aid to others

In the poignant parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus has pragmatically illustrated the meaning of a neighbour in the basic sense of every man's duty to his fellowman. Regardless of the evolving magnanimity of one's love, Jesus recognised the mortal limitation of anyone in trying to look after one's own duties and also those of the stricken people of the world. Human life is short and one can do only so much. Even Jesus explained that he came mostly to minister to the needs of a certain segment of people during his limited span on earth.*

Though Jesus and the masters schedule their time in a manner most helpful to true devotees, still their liberating teachings can be universally followed through all times. Thus, Jesus intimated that though the ordinary man cannot physically or by material means ameliorate widespread afflictions, he should do whatever he can within his power and means to help any person whose need has been definitely placed in his path, as symbolized in the parable of the Good Samaritan.

To relieve someone's distress is to render help as one would like to be helped if he were in the same position. Whether the needy person be someone in one's own vicinity or in a distant foreign land, anywhere, anyone who comes in close relationship with a person physically, mentally, or spiritually, that person is a neighbour.

Man's duty to help his fellow beings does not necessarily consist of material aid. To give physical help to a neighbour is good, to give him mental and moral help so that he can help himself is better, and to give him God-consciousness and freedom from ignorance through spiritual upliftment is best. One should serve his neighbour appropriately in accordance with these criteria.

* Matthew 15:24 (see Discourse 44).

In the parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus contrasted the callousness of the priest and the Levite* —who were accorded high spiritual status because of their ceremonial and hereditary positions—with the compassion of the Samaritan, who demonstrated the true spirit of religion despite belonging to a social caste commonly disdained as spiritually inferior. Whatever be man's social titles of race, religion, nationality, they are his defining characteristics for only a little while; but all souls are gods forever. At death, man is rudely divested of his mortal adornments; so before he leaves this earth, he should declare his pure nobility as a child of God. Jesus was not proud because he was born of the kingly house of David, but because he was a son of God. If there were no boundaries fancy-frozen by man, all peoples of the earth would have sufficiency in the nurturing bounty of nature. A rebirth of loving God and loving one's neighbour as urged by Jesus Christ would bring a spirit of oneness to heal the ills of the world.

Only by fellowship with God will harmony and fellowship come on earth. When one actually perceives the Divine Presence in his own soul, he is inspirited with love for his neighbour—Jew and Christian, Muslim and Hindu—in the consciousness that one's true Self and the Selves of all others are equally soul-reflections of the one infinitely lovable God. Utopian social and political agendas will have little long-lasting benefit until humanity learns the eternal science by which followers of any religion may know God in the oneness of soul and Spirit communion.

To observe the "first commandment," as cited by Jesus, is the centric obligation of human life, subordinating and making servile to it the host of demanding responsibilities man gathers unto himself. Jesus supported the scriptural command to "Honour thy father and mother" but love God supremely. Father, mother, friends, beloved ones, are gifts of God. Love the One Love that hides Himself behind all kindly masks. Love Him first and foremost, or times without numbering He will visit the heart and slip away unrecognised and unwelcomed.

To be with God now is of utmost importance. His love is the only shelter in life and death. Time should be utilized to its best advantage; why shouldn't it be to reclaim oneness with the Creator of this Universe, our Infinite Father?

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* The Levites were members of the priestly tribe descended from Moses' brother Aaron, or those assigned ceremonial temple functions by the priests.

One of the most earnest prayers given to me by God, a universal prayer of divine love, is: "Heavenly Father, may Thy love shine forever on the sanctuary of my devotion and may I be able to awaken Thy love in all hearts."

Now it came to pass, as they went, that he entered into a certain village: and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his word. But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to him, and said, "Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? Bid her therefore that she help me."

And Jesus answered and said unto her, "Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her" (Luke 10:38–42).

Mary and Martha: balancing material duties with devotional communion

"Martha, you are conscientious about material things and duties, which cause you worry and scatter your mind. What is needful is to see to your highest spiritual duty of keeping your mind on God while tending to the performance of your various tasks. Mary has chosen that good single-heartedness of absorption of her thoughts and love in God alone, inspired by my words of wisdom. Thus her desire, which has quite withdrawn her mind from these other present concerns, shall not be taken away from her."

Jesus here addresses all seekers of God, whether they live a secular life in the world or a renunciant life in a hermitage. He extols the "better part" of God alone chosen by Mary, but commends the dutifulness of Martha provided she remember that "one thing is needful": to perform her material duties with the thought and love of God.

Some renunciants mistakenly think that if they tend to their duties in the hermitage, that alone would qualify them as being spiritual. Other renunciants think they can attain God-consciousness by neglecting serviceful activities to engage only in the spiritual duty of meditation.

The primary purpose of an ashram environment is to offer a haven in which to seek God. Renunciants who are so engrossed in their work

that they neglect meditation and the inner practice of the presence of God during activity are not justified to live in a hermitage and receive the benefits provided for those who are sincerely seeking God. If some devotees can become so immersed in the God-communion of *samadhi* meditation that they consequently neglect their material duties, such omission is forgivable; but rare is that soul who qualifies for such exception. (For the most part such attempts are no more than false piety.) Serviceful duties in a hermitage have to be performed by members of the community, and when devotees engage in those dutiful actions with the thought of serving God, and give Him also their undivided attention in regular deep meditation, they are on the right path to receive the grace of God. But those who lose themselves in busy-ness, forgetful of God and negligent in meditation, receive no spiritual satisfaction and begin to doubt the purpose of a renunciant's life as compared to the offerings of the world.

It is better to live a life of service to the world in a spiritual environment conducive to high ideals and thoughts of God than in a material environment fraught with evils. Nevertheless, any environment can be spiritualized with the presence of God. Thus Jesus warned Martha, and by extension all disciples engaged in secular responsibilities, that though she was commendably and necessarily tending to material duties, she was missing the blessing of her service because her mind was so distracted by external demands it accommodated no thought of God. Jesus upheld the action of Mary because it was from no deliberate wish to shun household work, but from sincere devotion that engrossed her mind wholly in God and the God-uniting wisdom of Jesus.

If Martha's works had been infused with Mary's devotion, Jesus would have made no distinction between the two sisters. Both were serving Jesus, one spiritually and the other seeing to his physical needs; but Mary's devotion pleased him more. Had Martha similarly absorbed his spirit, Jesus would have allowed Mary to assist Martha; but he did not want Mary to imitate her sister's material ways, rather that Martha should follow the devotional example of Mary.

That is what yoga teaches: In spite of one's duties to the world, the mind should be with God. Duty or no duty, if one tries his utmost to know God as his prime responsibility, that is the highest virtue; for no duty can be performed without borrowing the powers of God.

Every truth-seeker, whether living the secular life of a householder or that of a renunciant in a hermitage, should be able to express

alternately as needful the dual nature of Martha and Mary: performing dutiful actions with the thought of God, and devoutly engaging daily in the spiritual duty of absorbed meditation on God. No member of a household or ashram, by a pretence of meditation, should neglect material duties, as no member should disturb another spiritually inclined member when that individual is worshipfully engrossed in God.

That spiritual aspirant reaches perfection who serves with a devout heart and willing spirit both God and man, receiving quickly enlightenment and divine grace.

DISCOURSE 54

An Esoteric Perspective on The Lord's Prayer

"Our Father":
The Jnana Yoga Realization of Spirit as the Only Reality

❖

"Hallowed Be Thy Name":
The Holiness, Beauty, and Joy Pervading God's Creation

❖

The "Why" of Creation Is a Divinely Mystical Mystery
Beyond Human Comprehension

❖

"Thy Will Be Done":
The Karma Yoga Way of Manifesting God in Action

❖

Forgiveness and Deliverance: The Prayer of the Bhakti Yoga Devotee

❖

"The Kingdom, the Power, and the Glory":
The Universal Experience of God-realization

"Each phrase offered by Jesus in this profound prayer resonates a perfect harmony with the cosmic idealism of the ancient sacred scriptures of India....the cosmic truths that validate the defined systems of Jnana, Karma, and Bhakti Yoga."

And it came to pass, *that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples."*

And he said unto them, "When ye pray, say, 'Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth. Give us day by day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.'"

—Luke 11:1–4*

And it came to pass, as he spake these things, a certain woman of the company lifted up her voice, and said unto him, "Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked."

But he said, "Yea rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it."

—Luke 11:27–28

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*Luke 11:5–13 are commented on with the parallel references from Matthew in Discourse 30. Luke 11:14–26, also paralleled in Matthew, are commented on in Discourse 36.

DISCOURSE 54

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Parallel reference:

*"Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen" (Matthew 6:9–13).**

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*The Lord's Prayer as given in Chapter 6 of the Gospel According to St. Matthew is commented on in Discourse 28. In this present Discourse, Paramahansa Yogananda offers a further insightful commentary in which he fathoms the depths of the words and consciousness of Jesus to reveal a prayer of esoteric universality for the realization of the eternal relationship between the soul and God. *(Publisher's Note)*

The Lord's Prayer is the summital paean of Christendom, often quoted in worship, but seldom experienced as a personal realization. In simple words, each phrase offered by Jesus in this profound prayer resonates a perfect harmony with the cosmic idealism of the ancient sacred scriptures of India, the essence of which is grandly epitomized in the Bhagavad Gita.

The prayer can be analysed as consisting of four distinct parts, the whole of which addresses both the transcendence and immanence of God, and man's relationship with Him as the Heavenly Father of all. The first three parts convey, respectively, the cosmic truths that validate the defined systems of *Jnana, Karma,* and *Bhakti Yoga*—union with the Infinite through wisdom, right action, and divine love. The fourth, concluding segment is a summary obeisance to the Infinite Spirit as the omnificent God the Father.

1. "Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come."
2. "Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors."
3. "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."
4. "For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory for ever."

The first part will be easily understood if one applies the basis of the philosophy of *Jnana Yoga:* the realization of Spirit as the only Reality. Jesus' concept of God was one of pure idealism—as is that of the highest Sankhya-Yoga-Vedanta metaphysics of India. To follow fully the path of God-knowledge that Jesus followed, the path he evidenced to all the world, that the whole of common life revolves around a common centre and that that centre is God, is to find supreme inspiration from his idealism.*

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* Vedanta, the end or final message of the Hindu Vedas which appears in the Upanishads, propounds the philosophy of monistic idealism. Swami Shankara, peerless exponent of Advaita ("nondual") Vedanta, wrote: "The whole universe apprehended by the sensory mind and speech is naught but Spirit (*Sat*), the Reality transcending Nature. Nothing else exists."—*Crest Jewel of Wisdom,* verse 391.

Amit Goswami, Ph.D., professor of physics at the Institute of Theoretical Sciences at the University of Oregon, writes in his book *The Self-Aware Universe:* "Modern science validates an ancient idea—the idea that consciousness, not matter, is the ground

"Our Father": the Jnana Yoga realization of Spirit as the only Reality

What is God, so far as Jesus himself was concerned? He did not worship an anthropomorphic God—one conceived as having a personal form. He was not thinking of a supreme personage seated somewhere away in some unknown region above the cosmos. That personalized God could not appeal to his universal spirit; such an idea was not explicated in his words or his sermons, or by implication harboured in his thoughts. His realization embraced the knowing of the Absolute Reality of God as Spirit.* Jesus' lofty philosophy was, to a certain extent, the cause of his being marked as a spiritual revolutionary against many of the orthodox concepts of his own Hebrew people. To him God could not be limited by any parameters of creation—time, space, causality, form, personality—nor codified by man-made credos. God transcends them all.

The expression in the Lord's Prayer, "Father...in heaven," thus refers to the Creator in transcendental infinity who Himself is that Eternal Transcendent Consciousness. That Maker of all becomings spins forth the multifarious causal, astral, and physical creations from His One Being and is yet ever untouched by them. In this opening invocation to God, Jesus at once lifts our consciousness to the knowledge—the vision, understanding, realization—of the transcendental God. Perhaps if he were talking in our language today he would have said, "Our transcendental God" rather than "Our Father which art in heaven."

Now, the idea of a transcendental Deity by itself would naturally foster in man a sense that God is unreachably remote, apart from the

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of all being....The philosophy that has dominated science for centuries (physical, or material, realism) assumes that only matter—consisting of atoms or, ultimately, elementary particles—is real; all else are secondary phenomena of matter, just a dance of the constituent atoms. This worldview is called realism because objects are assumed to be real and independent of subjects, us, or of how we observe them....The facts prove otherwise; science proves the potency of a monistic philosophy over dualism—over spirit separated from matter. In the idealist philosophy, consciousness is fundamental....From this vantage point we see that some of the concepts of various religious traditions become as logical, elegant, and satisfying as the interpretation of experiments of quantum physics." *(Publisher's Note)*

* "But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship Him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:23–24; see Discourse 18).

affairs of His creatures and creation. That God has no relationship with the souls He created could not possibly be true, or the whole of the cosmos would indeed be absurdly purposeless. Jesus emphasized the eternal, inseparable relationship between God and humanity with the use of the word "our." He directs the worshipper's attention not merely to "*The* Father in heaven" but "*Our* Father in heaven"—your God, my God; God of Jesus, Moses, Krishna, Buddha, Mohammed; of all human beings, righteous and unrighteous, saviours and sinners. Not in an ordinary sense but with purposeful thought Jesus used that word "*Our* Father" to bring out the interrelationship between the transcendental God and the created being. The whole philosophy of the connection between the human soul and God is embodied in that one little word *our.* This God is the Source of all beings, hence He is the Father. Here "Father" is a symbol of Jesus' pure idealism: Spirit, the transcendental God, as the source, the Primal Progenitor, of all cosmic creation. From Him all things have come into manifestation, and in His own cosmic omnipotence they find their perfection: a Father. Under His guiding omniscience, all things move in their appointed course: a Father. In His beneficence and love, created beings find their inner strength and joy: a Father. Jesus expressed these metaphysical concepts in understandable language: "Our Father which art in heaven," the transcendental God inseparably related with all created beings: the source, the sustenance, and the salvation of all. The whole of this vast concept is given in this opening phrase of the Lord's Prayer.

Jesus continues: "Hallowed be Thy name." The meaning of the word *name* is better understood in the Vedic philosophy; it means creation. As a person's name is an outer symbol of who he is, so vibratory creation declares the transcendent Creator. The Sanskrit term *nama-rupa* (*nama,* akin to English *name*) translates as "name and form." "Hallowed be Thy name" means hallowed is Thy creation, holy is Thy manifestation, spiritual is Thy Self-revelation through the outwardly working Holy Ghost, the Word or cosmic vibration of *Aum* (Amen). God's creation is divine; it is the spiritual resemblance, spiritual expression, of the Cosmic Reality.

"Hallowed be Thy name": the holiness, beauty, and joy pervading God's creation

But the true nature of creation as a divine emanation of God can be fully known only by ecstatic oneness with God through the opening of the spiritual eye. Such was the grace bestowed on the devotee Arjuna, as recounted in the Bhagavad Gita:

> "Thou canst not see Me with mortal eyes. Therefore I give thee sight divine...."
>
> "Arjuna saw the multifarious marvellous Presence of the Deity —infinite in forms, shining in every direction of space, omnipotence all-pervading, adorned with countless celestial robes and garlands and ornaments, upraising heavenly weapons, fragrant with every lovely essence, His mouths and eyes everywhere!
>
> "If a thousand suns appeared simultaneously in the sky, their light might dimly resemble the splendour of that Omnific Being!
>
> "There, resting within the infinite Form of the God of gods, Arjuna beheld the entire universe with all its diversified manifestations."*

No slightest shadow of doubt about the immediacy of God can remain in the mind of the devotee who perceives the whole manifested universe as the Creator's resplendent raiment.† In Cosmic Consciousness, one realizes that the underlying Reality has cloaked Itself in the ceaselessly transforming cosmos, declaring Itself without revealing Itself, just as the various costumes with which humans adorn themselves bespeak their changing roles and fancies, not their essential nature. A person's raiment may change or be discarded, but this does not alter the wearer. Birth, maturity, old age; life and death; creation and change; sorrow and suffering; joy and happiness; pain and pleasure—to divine vision all are shimmering undulations in the fabric of time and space belonging to the domain of duality, not to the Supreme Unity. Though God's universe-garment is constantly changing, He remains ever the same; as individualizations of His Being, we too are to partake of that changelessness. The purpose of each soul's sojourn on earth is to learn to see beyond the evanescence of phenomena to the Eternal Reality. No matter how compelling or enticing are the outer trappings of mayic manifestation, let them not lure the attention away from the Infinite Lord who sports the gossamer cosmos as a mere costume of masquerade. The devotee who transcends the myopia of body consciousness sees with the superior vision of divine intuition, and resolves all formerly incomprehensible dualities in the ecstatic perception of creation as Beauty and Joy.

How expressively the Gita extols this truth: "adorned with countless celestial robes and garlands and ornaments"—the stars are His

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* *God Talks With Arjuna: The Bhagavad Gita* XI:8, 10–13.

† "O Lord my God, Thou art very great; Thou art clothed with honour and majesty, who coverest Thyself with light as with a garment" (Psalms 104:1–2).

crown jewels; the earth His footstool; the lightning, thunder, storms, and cataclysms the flash of His accoutrements and snap of His cloak as He dances in joy the whirling rhythms of creation, preservation, destruction. Everything in the objective world is an added decoration to beautify the cosmic garment of God; behind all these is the hidden Divine Reality. Such was the devotee Arjuna's realization in the eleventh chapter of the Gita; and it is in this connection that we are to understand the wisdom philosophy of idealism represented by Jesus Christ in the Lord's Prayer.*

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* A parallel example in Judeo-Christian scripture is found in the Old Testament Book of Job, whose extraordinary ordeals and subsequent demand for an explanation from God are proverbial. In the Introduction to his English rendition *The Book of Job* (New York: HarperCollins, 1992), translator Stephen Mitchell writes:

"Job's outrage at the world's injustice is directed straight to the creator of that world. There are no detours or half-measures, no attempt to deflect ultimate responsibility by blaming a devil or an original sin.

"'He [God] does not care; so I say he murders both the pure and the wicked.

"'When the plague brings sudden death, he laughs at the anguish of the innocent.

"'He hands the earth to the wicked and blindfolds the judges' eyes.

"'Who does it, if not he?'...

"All this bewilderment and outrage couldn't be so intense if Job didn't truly love God. He senses that in spite of appearances there is somewhere an ultimate justice, but he doesn't know where....Of course, the answer Job receives is anything but what he expected....He is taken up in a state of vision, and enters a world of primal energy, independent of human beings, which includes what humans might experience as terrifying or evil....

"These huge symbols of evil, so terrifying to humans who haven't seen, or won't acknowledge, the destructive Shiva-aspect of God, are presented to us as God's playthings. They are a part of the continuum of nature, which runs seamlessly from angel to beast. 'The roaring of lions,' as Blake wrote, 'the howling of wolves, the raging of the stormy sea, and the destructive sword, are portions of *eternity* too great for the eye of man.'...The only other source in the Bible that approaches [Job's vision] in kilowatts is a passage from the anonymous prophet known as Second Isaiah: 'I form light and create darkness; I make peace and create evil; I the Unnamable do all these things.'"

In essence, God's reply to Job is that he must rise from human consciousness to divine consciousness in order to understand the seeming paradoxes of creation: "Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding. Who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest? or who hath stretched the line upon it? Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? or who laid the corner stone thereof; When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?" (Job 38:4–7).

"The only scriptural analogy to God's answer," writes Mitchell, "is the vision granted to Arjuna in chapter 11 of the Gita, in which that prince experiences, down to the marrow of his bones, the glory and the terror of the universe, all creation and all destruction, embraced in the blissful play of the Supreme Lord. The manifestations there are more cosmic than in *Job*, and the realization of God as 'the Self seated in the heart of all creatures' is far clearer....[But] when Job says, 'I had heard of you with my

Yet there remains the question that has always begged an answer: Why creation? Is the cosmos accidental, something God created out of His own whimsy? Why did He do it? The Bible states: "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are and were created."* But how can one justify His pleasure with human misery; or His *lila*, play, when it necessitates the painful dualities of the world? The Vedas and Upanishads explain that the One wanted to enjoy Its infinite, immortal Bliss-consciousness through the many: "*Eko 'ham bahu shyam*—I was One; I wanted to be many." But man, in his persistent quest for reasons, asks what happened to Him that He wanted to be many and caused all this misery and sorrow. Theological answers do not satisfy the rational mind. The boldest, truest answer ever given is that *we do not know.* It is *maya*—not an illusion, not a hallucination, but a divinely mystical mystery beyond the mental comprehension, the intellectual rationalization, of the human being. As a philosopher beautifully put it: "Whenever an honest attempt has been made to unravel the mystery of the many and the One, mysticism seems to be the only or final answer." Can a tiny cup measure the ocean? The limited human intellect can little fathom the Cosmic Reality and never reach the why of God's creation. Thus it is said of those who in ecstasy have entered the secret vaults of the heart of God and have perforce returned with no words to tell: "He who knows, he knows; naught else knows."

The "why" of creation is a divinely mystical mystery beyond human comprehension

Then Jesus says: "Thy kingdom come." Here he affirms the transcendence of the Ultimate Reality made manifest as the Immanent Essence of the universal divine imagings of the Creator-Father.

"Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come." So sublime, so spiritual, so philosophic is this prayer! Transcendental God, immanent God, and creation as God's divine manifestation—all are expressed in the first section of the prayer, a grand statement of the *Jnana Yoga* truth realization of ultimate wisdom.

The key to the second part of the prayer is the word "will." "Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread.

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ears; but now my eyes have seen you,' he is no longer a servant, who fears God and avoids evil. He has faced evil, has looked straight into its face and through it, into a vast wonder and love." *(Publisher's Note)*

* Revelation 4:11.

And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." In this second part is expressed the philosophy of causation and manifestation—karma, as it is referred to in the Bhagavad Gita.* The whole creation is God's karma, God's action of manifestation—the expression of His will. Actions are always preceded and sustained by will. Material science declares that all things in the universe are different manifestations of energy; the yogi, a spiritual scientist, discerns also the subtler underlying energy of *prana,* life force. But what is energy; what is *prana*? Energy is the gross manifestation of will, and will is the power or manifesting faculty of consciousness.

"Thy will be done": the Karma Yoga way of manifesting God in action

Though all creation came from God's divine vibration, the rebel Satanic Delusion has usurped the material expression of God's "kingdom," abetted by the sinful actions of the masses over whom has been cast the pall of ignorance that shuts out the light of God's presence. Thus the words "Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven": Make manifest in the material vibrations of earth the pristine perfection of the Holy Creative Vibration that went forth from Thy taintless transcendence by the divine fiat of Thy Will.

"Give us this day our daily bread": "Bread" means cosmic energy, the all-sustaining cosmic vibration of *Aum.*† Again, a reference to karma, cosmic action by which God sustains all life.

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* "The *Aum* (*Visarga,* the two dots ':' representing the duality of Cosmic Vibration) that causes the birth and sustenance and dissolution of beings and their various natures is termed Karma (cosmic action)" (*God Talks With Arjuna: The Bhagavad Gita* VIII:3).

From Paramahansa Yogananda's commentary: "The cosmic vibration (*Aum*) with its law of duality and relativity emanates from Spirit and causes the birth, sustenance, and dissolution of all matter and beings through the law of karma. This law of action holds sway over all activities of man and Nature....

"Karma signifies all cosmic divine and material activities as well as the spiritual and worldly activities of human beings....The *Aum* or cosmic intelligent vibration is the first manifestation of God in creation. Therefore all the cosmic activities emanating from the intelligent cosmic Vibratory Being—the *Aum*—are termed Supreme Cosmic Karma. Man is a miniature or microcosmic manifestation of the macrocosmic Vibratory Being (the invisible intelligent Holy Ghost, or *Aum,* or the Word). Man's spiritual, worldly, and evil activities are termed human karma. God, manifested as the cosmic Vibratory Being or *Aum,* is the direct Originator of all cosmic and human activities, governed by the law of karma, or cause and effect. The whole cosmos and all its sentient beings are subject to this law."

† "Man shall not live by bread [material sustenance] alone, but by every word [unit of cosmic energy vibrating out of the Holy Ghost or omnipresent *Aum*] that proceedeth out of the mouth of God [descends into the human body through the subtle astral centre of life in the medulla oblongata]" (Matthew 4:4; see commentary in Discourse 8).

Jesus With Mary and Martha

"Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her."

—Luke 10:41–42

"Mary has chosen that good single-heartedness of absorption of her thoughts and love in God alone, inspired by my words of wisdom. Thus her desire, which has quite withdrawn her mind from these other present concerns, shall not be taken away from her."...

Jesus extols the "better part" of God alone chosen by Mary, but commends the dutifulness of Martha provided she remember that "one thing is needful": to perform her material duties with the thought and love of God....That is what yoga teaches: In spite of one's duties to the world, the mind should be with God....Every truth-seeker, whether living the secular life of a householder or that of a renunciant in a hermitage, should be able to express alternately as needful the dual nature of Martha and Mary.

—Paramahansa Yogananda

Painting by Heinrich Hofmann

"And forgive us our debts (our sins), as we forgive our debtors." In that sentence is expressed the karmic law of cause and effect as applied to human life. Earlier Jesus had said: "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."* In Hindu philosophy there is no room for salvation by blind faith or by chance; in individuals and in nature, every result has a cause, either approximate or distinct. The devotee who would find God actively initiates those causes that result in soul unfoldment and divine union: *Karma Yoga,* which unites man's fallible will with the omniscience of God's Divine Will.

Forgiveness and deliverance: the prayer of the Bhakti Yoga devotee

Thus, in this second part of the Lord's Prayer is contained the whole philosophy of karma, the action of creation and of the universal law of cause and effect.

"Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." This third section of the prayer is pure *bhakti,* devotion. For intellectuals it is a long-standing perplexing question how God could lead man into evil temptation, and why.† But followers of the devotional way to God (*Bhakti Yoga*) focus on a simple truth: The easiest way to overcome finiteness is to give oneself completely to God, with the totality of one's faults and one's virtues. How quickly whatever is negative within one's character is resolved by love of God! Love, in a most wonderful way, transforms and spiritualizes wherever it appears. By patiently cultivating devotion, the *bhakta* eventually finds that no matter what temptation of desire arises in his life, it is at once transcended when he sincerely gives that desire to the Divine. By the responding touch of God's perfection, all the negativeness trying to infiltrate the devotee's heart can be instantly overcome.

Through everything beautiful and desirable in this world, it is the Cosmic Lover who is calling to man. The lure of worldly offerings is a test of choices, whether God's children want Him or material gratifications. So long as one chooses God's playthings and not Him, so long will that soul have to reincarnate, unfulfilled, in mortal entanglements. But the devotee who turns his face Homeward, recognising behind all lesser desires the desire of the soul for the love of God, is

* Matthew 6:14–15; see Discourse 28. See also Discourse 35, commentary on Mark 11:25–26.

† See also Discourse 28.

on the path to true and lasting happiness. He transmutes every temptation into the one divine yearning for God.

Hence, the principle expressed in this part of the Lord's Prayer is not that God leads us into temptation, but that by devotional will one can transform a temptation into a source of spiritual illumination by bringing into it the greater power of God. This yoga of absolute resignation —unqualified devotion and divine love, *bhakti*—is invoked in this supplication: "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."

Thus *Jnana, Karma,* and *Bhakti,* corresponding to the processes of (1) thought, (2) volition, and (3) feeling, are the basis of the first three parts of the Lord's Prayer, making this prayer inclusive of the highest philosophy of human life. After all, what is the purpose of life? To attain oneness with God, by purifying human reasoning or intellect with the wisdom consciousness of God; attuning human will to be an instrument of God's will; oblating human love in God's universal love. Thought, volition, and feeling are faculties of the soul; prayer spiritualizes them. Prayer is the lifting up of the soul, of the entire being of man, to God. The Lord's Prayer in its completeness addresses the spiritualization of the whole spectrum of life.

Jesus then concludes with a worshipful encomium in summation: "For Thine is the Kingdom, and the power, and the glory for ever."

"The kingdom, the power, and the glory": the universal experience of God-realization

"The kingdom" is the overspreading transcendent-immanent Cosmic Consciousness of God the Father, the Infinite Intelligence that is the sole Reality of all manifestation. "The power" is the omnipotence of God's divine will. And what is the greatest "glory" of God but His love? Thus we have God's pure intelligence, God's pure will, God's pure love—the kingdom, power, and glory, all of God. Man's rationalizing mind cannot conceive God as the Nameless Absolute; but He is comprehensible in the concept of a triune nature consisting of consciousness, existence, and divine love or bliss.

1. Consciousness: all-pervading Omniscience;
2. Existence: cosmic will expressing as the objectification of life and all manifestation;
3. Bliss (divine love): Love perfected is bliss. Bliss, love, and beauty —these terms synonymously complement one another. Beauty is the harmonious manifestation of love; the perfection of love is bliss.

As Jesus referred to the kingdom, power, and glory of God, so the *rishis* of India invoked God as Truth, Good, and Beauty.* God's consciousness is Truth, the ultimate reality and substance of everything. God's existence as manifestation and life is Good; God's bliss or love is Beauty. God is Consciousness, Existence, Bliss; Truth, Good, and Beauty; God is Intelligence, the Divine Conceiver of Universes; God is Life, the mystery of the many in the One; God is Love, Beauty, Bliss.

Thus the true revelation of the meaning of the climax of the prayer—"the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever"—shows an underlying unity of the universal experience of God realized by Jesus, Krishna, and illumined prophets of all religions.

And it came to pass, as he spake these things, a certain woman of the company lifted up her voice, and said unto him, "Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked."

But he said, "Yea, rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it" (Luke 11:27–28).

"Blessed are those true devotees who hear in meditation the divine revelations of the Cosmic Sound, the omniscient word of God—and know how to keep in tune with it continuously—for its guidance will transform their human life into the life divine."†

Hearing the word of God in meditation on Aum, the Cosmic Sound

In speaking of hearing the word of God, Jesus was referring not only to the divine truths he was conveying to the world, but of how God talks to each of His devotees personally in the here and now, as He did with the prophets of old. Jesus taught his understanding disciples how to

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* *Satyam, shivam, sundaram:* a well-known Sanskrit *mantra* (chant) for worshipfully invoking a meditative perception of God.

† "If thou would'st hear the Nameless, and wilt dive
Into the Temple-cave of thine own self,
There, brooding by the central altar, thou
May'st haply learn the Nameless hath a voice,
By which thou wilt abide, if thou be wise."
— *Tennyson, "The Ancient Sage"*

contact God through communion with the Word or Holy Ghost—the Cosmic Sound of *Aum,* defined by Patanjali, India's great sage and exponent of yoga, as God's symbol or manifestation. Through the centuries, however, because of secrecy protecting sacred techniques, this knowledge as given by Jesus has gone out of Christian living. Self-Realization Fellowship is reviving that esoteric knowledge, teaching for the first time in the western world the specific techniques of tuning in with God through the Holy Ghost.

Every devotee who enters interiorized silence, whether by the sheer intensity of devotion or by practice of a yoga technique, discovers, when the mind grows calm and the concentration is deep, the comforting vibratory presence of *Aum,* the Cosmic Sound.* God's Intelligence, immanent in the *Aum* Vibration, intimates divine guidance or inspiration through the devotee's intuitive feeling, hearing, or vision. *Aum* is the mother of all sounds in the universe, including all human languages; and also of all types of rays in the cosmos. Any manifestation presupposes the inherent presence of the Cosmic Vibration. During the devotee's meditation, *Aum* can vibrate the response or wishes of the Divine in words of any intelligible language in audible form or in luminous letters revealed to the devotee's inner gaze. The etheric sounds or letters may be audible or visible to a single devotee or to a group of devotees, according to the wish of the Divine.

Thus when a certain woman, uplifted in Jesus' company, praised his mother for having given to the world such a divine son, he used that opportunity to stress the importance, above all human achievements, of knowing God through His Holy Word: "Better than bearing divine children on the physical plane is the knowledge of how to receive personally the blessing and presence of God through hearing the Cosmic Sound and remaining in tune with it." He made it plain that listening once or twice to the Word of God is not enough, but that one must also "keep it"—that is, through regular divine contact in meditation, to

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* "It is a beauteous evening, calm and free,
The holy time is quiet as a Nun
Breathless with adoration; the broad sun
Is sinking down in its tranquillity;
The gentleness of heaven broods o'er the Sea;
Listen! the mighty Being is awake,
And doth with his eternal motion make
A sound like thunder—everlastingly."—*Wordsworth*

keep the consciousness permanently attuned to the guidance and blessings of *Aum*, and discipline his life by its inner intuitive directions.

Unscientific prayer and mechanical religious observances leave many devotees bewildered and uncertain as to how—or even whether—God responds to them. There are ten principal manifestations of God by which the devotee may know that God has revealed Himself. First among them is the expression of *Aum* or Holy Ghost, Cosmic Vibration. This in turn manifests as Cosmic Sound and Cosmic Light. The others are: Cosmic Intelligence, Cosmic Wisdom, Cosmic Devotion, Cosmic Love, Cosmic Peace, Cosmic Calmness, Cosmic Bliss.

The ten principal manifestations of God

Any devotee who in meditation beholds not just glimmers of light but the brilliant overspreading Cosmic Light—or the luminous tricoloured spiritual eye which epitomizes Cosmic Vibration, Christ Consciousness, and Cosmic Consciousness—assuredly has God-contact. Cosmic Light may also take the form of some personal aspect of Deity; or, out of that Light the great ones—such as Jesus, Krishna, Buddha, the God-knowing masters and saints—may manifest themselves unto the devotee who is deeply in tune.

One who contacts God as Cosmic Intelligence knows the infinity of Christ Consciousness and perceives the working of the divine laws of order and harmony that govern all creation. In Cosmic Wisdom, manifested Intelligence or Truth, one may set aside the study of books; he receives all knowledge through the direct perception of the intuition of his soul.

When God manifests as Cosmic Devotion, the devotee is absorbed in sweetest divine longing for and reverential worship of the Lord as Father, Mother, Friend, or in some other ideal relationship. In the manifestation of Cosmic Love, the devotee and God merge as one in unending thrills of ecstasy—the love of millions of human loves combined—expanding the devotee's heart to hold the Infinite Love that unites all creation.

Any devotee who feels God as Cosmic Peace (usually experienced in the first contact with *Aum*, the Comforter), as Cosmic Calmness ("Be still, and know that I am God"), or as intoxicating ever new Cosmic Bliss—or as any of the ten manifestations singly or in combination—can be certain that he is contacting God.

Steadfast practice of meditation techniques of communion with *Aum* opens the portal to unending realizations of God-consciousness.

Communion with *Aum* is the best way to worship a personal concept of God (any specific manifestation of the Unmanifested Absolute). To focus one's worship on an image or mentally conceived depiction of God in form is to limit the Illimitable unless the devotee also includes communion with *Aum,* the vibratory manifestation out of which emerge all "forms" of the Divine Presence. Continuous meditation on Cosmic *Aum* expands one's consciousness in that all-pervading Vibration, attuning the devotee to the omniscience and omnipresence of God reflected therein, revealing the Infinite in His cosmic forms and aspects, and bestowing realization of Spirit as *Satchitananda:* ever-existing, ever-conscious, ever-new Bliss.

Those who fill their consciousness with *Aum* are intoxicated with the joy felt in the Cosmic Sound, as were the disciples of Jesus after receiving the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost.*

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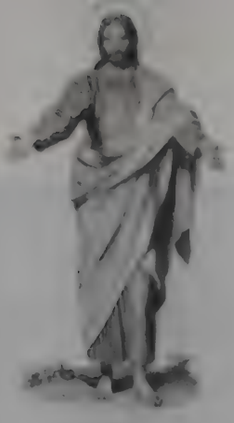
* Acts 2:1–21 (see Discourse 70).



DISCOURSE 55

Jesus Condemns Hypocrisy and Self-Serving Judgment in Religion and Law

The Hypocrisy of Outer Religious Observance
Without Inner Purification

❖

"Woe Unto You" Who Seek Acclaim
Through Pretentious Displays of Superficial Spirituality

❖

Who May Rightly Use the Honorific of "Rabbi" or "Master"?

❖

How the Cumulative Effects of Good and Evil Actions
Affect the Destiny of Nations

❖

"Woe Unto You" Who Defile the Altar of the Body
and the Temple of the Soul by Evil

"Anyone who uses religion for business, 'holiness' for personal acquisition, and exploitation of God for material gain creates baneful evil karma....He who is truly great, but cloaks himself in a natural humility, will be exalted before others and in the approbation of God."

And as he spake, a certain Pharisee besought him to dine with him: and he went in, and sat down to meat. And when the Pharisee saw it, he marvelled that he had not first washed before dinner.

And the Lord said unto him, "Now do ye Pharisees make clean the outside of the cup and the platter; but your inward part is full of ravening and wickedness. Ye fools, did not He that made that which is without make that which is within also? But rather give alms of such things as ye have; and, behold, all things are clean unto you.

"But woe unto you, Pharisees! for ye tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass over judgment and the love of God: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.

"Woe unto you, Pharisees! for ye love the uppermost seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets.

"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are as graves which appear not, and the men that walk over them are not aware of them."

Then answered one of the lawyers, and said unto him, "Master, thus saying thou reproachest us also."

And he said, "Woe unto you also, ye lawyers! for ye lade men with burdens grievous to be borne, and ye yourselves touch not the burdens with one of your fingers.

"Woe unto you! for ye build the sepulchres of the prophets, and your fathers killed them. Truly ye bear witness that ye allow the deeds of your fathers: for they indeed killed them, and ye build their sepulchres. Therefore also said the wisdom of God, 'I will send them prophets and apostles, and some of them they shall slay and persecute': That the blood of all the prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation; from the blood of Abel unto the blood of Zechariah, which perished between the altar and the temple: verily I say unto you, it shall be required of this generation.

"Woe unto you, lawyers! for ye have taken away the key of

knowledge: ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered."

—Luke 11:37–52

"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves.

"Woe unto you ye blind guides, which say, 'Whosoever shall swear by the temple, it is nothing; but whosoever shall swear by the gold of the temple, he is a debtor!' Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gold, or the temple that sanctifieth the gold? And, 'Whosoever shall swear by the altar, it is nothing; but whosoever sweareth by the gift that is upon it, he is guilty.' Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gift, or the altar that sanctifieth the gift? Whoso therefore shall swear by the altar, sweareth by it, and by all things thereon. And whoso shall swear by the temple, sweareth by it, and by Him that dwelleth therein. And he that sweareth by heaven, sweareth by the throne of God, and by Him that sitteth thereon."

—Matthew 23:15–22

And as he said these things unto them, the scribes and the Pharisees began to urge him vehemently, and to provoke him to speak of many things: Laying wait for him, and seeking to catch something out of his mouth, that they might accuse him.

In the mean time, when there were gathered together an innumerable multitude of people, insomuch that they trode one upon another, he began to say unto his disciples first of all, "Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. For there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known. Therefore whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness shall be heard in the light; and that which ye have spoken in the ear in closets shall be proclaimed upon the housetops."

—Luke 11:53—12:3

DISCOURSE 55

Jesus Condemns Hypocrisy and Self-Serving Judgment in Religion and Law

And as he spake, a certain Pharisee besought him to dine with him: and he went in, and sat down to meat. And when the Pharisee saw it, he marvelled that he had not first washed before dinner.

And the Lord said unto him, "Now do ye Pharisees make clean the outside of the cup and the platter; but your inward part is full of ravening and wickedness. Ye fools, did not He that made that which is without make that which is within also? But rather give alms of such things as ye have; and, behold, all things are clean unto you.

"But woe unto you, Pharisees! for ye tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass over judgment and the love of God: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone" (Luke 11:37–42).

Parallel reference:

"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel.

"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also" (Matthew 23:23–26).

66 O you hypocrites, you are diligent to display the physical cleanliness of the outer vessels of your life, but their content consisting of your inner life is unclean with 'ravening and wickedness' and evil thoughts. Know you not in your foolishness that God made both the outer physical utilities of the body and its inner mental and spiritual faculties? You should purify your outer life by good actions and your inner life by good thoughts and meditation. Your body, mind, and soul-image of God should be kept uniformly sanctified by inner and outer discipline.*

The hypocrisy of outer religious observance without inner purification

"You should not so concentrate on the outer purificatory disciplines that you neglect the more important cleansing of your inner life of the covetousness of 'extortion and excess' that you may rather be a giver of alms to others of the finer spiritual qualities untapped within you—'such things as ye have.' By bringing into manifestation through wisdom and meditation your innate God-made divine qualities, and giving of those to others, you yourself become pure and make others pure. When the consciousness is pure, 'behold, all things are clean unto you'—you find the whole cosmos filled with purity, replete with the taintless presence of God.

"But O you hypocrites, blind with ignorance, you will instead reap much woe owing to your evils. To appear admirable, you pay token tithes, but have omitted observance of 'the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith.' You ought not to forget the karmic law of cause and effect that divinely judges the actions of all men; nor should you be derelict in love for God in divine communion in meditation, and in cultivating faith in the redeeming power of His mercy—'These ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.' It is the duty of your office to thereby cleanse your own life, and by example teach the populace the importance of inner as well as outer purity."

* See Discourse 44, page 855, note on the elaborate ritual handwashings observed by the Pharisees.

Jesus declared that spiritual ignorance is evident in all who ceremoniously pay great attention to the practice of the externals of religious observances, but omit the far more important obligations of inner discipline leading to divine wisdom: following the cause-effect spiritual laws of righteous behaviour, practising divine forgiveness, and developing the unshakable conviction of faith by intuitive contact of God in meditation. Religious clerics who are circumscribed by theological prescriptions and proscriptions, and who have not purified their souls, are blind guides who fight to prevent the swallowing of the little "gnat" of transgression of religious ceremony, while unwittingly swallowing the big "camel" of ignorant spiritual transgression! It seemed they feared exaggerated consequences of neglect of theological observances more than the actual dire suffering of acute indigestion of ignorance resulting from lack of inner spiritual purification.

"Woe unto you, Pharisees! for ye love the uppermost seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets" (Luke 11:43).

Parallel references:

*And he said unto them in his doctrine, "Beware of the scribes, which love to go in long clothing, and love salutations in the marketplaces, and the chief seats in the synagogues, and the uppermost rooms at feasts: which devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayers: these shall receive greater damnation" (Mark 12:38–40).**

* * *

"But all their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments, and love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, 'Rabbi, Rabbi.'

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* Cf. parallel reference in Luke 20:45–47.

"But be not ye called 'Rabbi': for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren. And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven. Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ.

"But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted...."

"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation" (Matthew 23:5–12, 14).

"O you hypocrites, you will attract misery unto yourselves through your love of man's recognition, having no conscience as to your standing in God's eyes. Desire for human praise motivates the affected discipline of your outer life, which you put on obvious display, while hypocritically you conceal your failure to pay attention to the spiritualization of your inner life. Woe unto you who forget to cultivate the joys of an earned eternal life, settling instead for a short-lived pretentious status.

"Woe unto you" who seek acclaim through pretentious displays of superficial spirituality

"Ignorantly you covet the prominent seats in the synagogues and the uppermost rooms at feasts, and array yourselves in elaborate apparel denoting your station that you might receive the honorific greetings of the people in the marketplaces who feed your vanity."

Jesus abhorred hypocrisy as noxiously devastating to spirituality. Servants of God should not, out of love for human praise, make a false show of piety in their eagerness to gather the flattery and acclaim of spiritually blind devotees. Jesus cited the tawdry sham of the "scribes and Pharisees" who sought to appear impressive by "making broad their phylacteries"—carrying on their persons large religious scrolls, as amulets—and wearing showy, wide-bordered garments; and reserving always for themselves the most conspicuous and prestigious places of honour. Jesus warned his followers to be wary of those whose insincerity is displeasing to God—to Him who sees the hearts of all. Jesus saw the religious hypocrites of his time as men who used their garb of holiness to obtain the money and property of widows and

* Jesus repeats this admonition in other contexts in Luke 14:11 (see Discourse 58) and Luke 18:14 (see Discourse 61).

other naive unprotected persons. They pretended to be pious by making long prayers, which attract the attention of men but draw no notice from God. According to the law of karma, such hypocritical, speciously pious persons can have only one fate—"greater damnation." That is, they will be steeped in even greater self-created delusion; the karmic consequences of their hypocrisy and wanton misuse of spiritual authority will condemn them to be far away from God.

Hypocritical behaviour is not uncommon among priests, preachers, and teachers of all climes and times. The unscrupulous use any manner of preaching and prayer in an exaggerated show of fervour before their congregations in order to convince others of their holiness —and thus to receive popularity, adulation, and financial largess. Anyone who uses religion for business, "holiness" for personal acquisition, and exploitation of God for material gain creates baneful evil karma. By words and acts such persons blaspheme against God and His laws, and thus attract unto themselves added delusion and a heavy judgment of misery.

To his disciples, in the verses of Matthew, Jesus spoke words of caution as to how titles of honour should not be desired as a means of elevating the status of one's ego. Exalted titles carry with them exalted responsibility. Jesus reminded the disciples of the onus behind such honorifics as "rabbi" or "master," for "one is your Master, even Christ": There is only one Master of all creation and created things, the omnipresent God, whose universal reflection is the Christ Consciousness. All are brethren in that Infinite Christ Consciousness. And as we are all children of God, "Call no man your father upon earth": Do not limit your paternity as from an earthly father, for the one transcendent God who gave your father to look after you is your true eternal Father.

Who may rightly use the honorific of "rabbi" or "master"?

God works through channels of pure souls as He so chooses, so Jesus reminded the disciples that they must never desire, or appoint themselves, to be called "master," for Christ Consciousness in everything is the one divine Master, a reflection of God as the Supreme Guru of gurus. But anyone who is fully in tune with the Christ Consciousness, even as Jesus was, is a true master qualified to serve as a guru, if God so wills, to guide disciples to liberation.

In most scriptures the terminology is not precise. But the sages of Hindu scripture were peerless experts in carefully using Sanskrit words

according to their nuances of meaning. To understand any scripture, it is necessary to understand the definite meaning of the words, not only from their etymology, but also from the philosophical truth they are intended to convey.

Master means one who is the master, not of others, but of himself. He has complete wisdom-control of his senses. He is not a master who dominates the actions of others by the power of his commanding voice and will, but he who is the owner and wise ruler of his own actions. God is the ultimate owner, and therefore the Supreme Master, of the universe. Those who are one with Him are themselves masters, and can rightly be honoured with that title by others. Being established in divine consciousness—in fact, not imagination—they can proclaim their godly state as Christ affirmed his, and not in any way be egotistically affected by it. Having completely subdued the ego, a master neither covets nor flaunts an exalted title as his own. His whole being rather than his words declares his divine consciousness. He who says he is not a master is probably not a master; and he also is not a master who finds it necessary to declare to others that he is a master.

Essentially, as Jesus pointed out, "Ye are gods";* but it is spiritually presumptuous to present oneself as such until he has actually realized his divinity and behaves accordingly. One who has not mastered his moods, emotions, and sensory temptations; and who is bothered by life's many irritants, losing inner peace because others can "get his goat" by a few words of annoyance, is far from expressing himself as a god or a master.

A master may be a *jivanmukta,* literally, "freed while living." He has conquered all desires for mortal life, thus destroying the root cause of reincarnation. Even so, there may be subtle traces of karma of past lives not yet fully consumed in the fire of wisdom. The *jivanmukta* employs his spirituality to free himself, through various measures (as in *samadhi* meditation), from karma and hidden desires of past lives as well as the present. *Jivanmuktas* are kings among mortals. In their divine aloofness they can never be hurt no matter what is denied to them.

Once a *jivanmukta* is completely free from past and present karmic bondage, he is said to be a *siddha,* "a perfected being." Perfected beings on earth may be Christlike souls (their consciousness united with the universal Christ Consciousness); they may manifest the *parama-*

* John 10:34 (see Discourse 52).

hansa state, able to enter *nirvikalpa samadhi* in which they remain conscious simultaneously of the world as well as of God—performing the most exacting duties with no loss of God-perception (as contrasted with the lesser *savikalpa samadhi* experience of God-perception in trancelike interiorization).

Every master has a mission of spiritual works to perform, boldly in a public arena or in quiet obscurity away from the masses. When a master has a God-given special mission to do on earth, he is a messiah or an avatar, a world saviour whose life and message is a lasting legacy of soul-liberation for others. Many masters of God-realization have graced this world, but only a few were messiahs or avatars.

So Jesus was making a very important point when he cautioned his disciples not to be called masters, unless and until they were one with God as Christ Consciousness. That status with its responsibility is no simple matter. Jesus then reminded his disciples: "The greatest among you is he who is humblest and the most serviceful." This is the truest testimony of attunement with God. "Whosoever shall exaggerate the merit of his ego in order to attract peoples' praise and favour will instead be found out and draw to himself criticism and deprecation, and will be abased in the eyes of God. He who is truly great, but cloaks himself in a natural humility, will be exalted before others and in the approbation of God."

> *"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are as graves which appear not, and the men that walk over them are not aware of them" (Luke 11:44).**

Parallel reference:

> *"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity" (Matthew 23:27–28).*

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* According to Jewish law (Numbers 19:16), a person who touched a grave was considered unclean for seven days.

66 Because of your hypocritical action of feigned holiness for effect, you will attract much anguish through the deepening of your ignorance. As the outer surface of a grave is made to look nice, while its inner content is a corruption of flesh and bones, so by your outer veneer of holiness you put on a grand appearance of righteousness, while your inside is filled with a life of decay and despoiled wisdom. People see your beauteous facade, unaware of your inner defilement."

External purity can hardly influence inner purity, but purity of the inner life invariably brings about purity of the outer life. To hold appearance and superficial actions paramount is to use hypocritical religious manners to hide the gross, unhappy, ungodly, misery-making habits within.

> *Then answered one of the lawyers, and said unto him, "Master, thus saying thou reproachest us also."*
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> *And he said, "Woe unto you also, ye lawyers! for ye lade men with burdens grievous to be borne, and ye yourselves touch not the burdens with one of your fingers" (Luke 11:45–46).*

Parallel reference:

> *Then spake Jesus to the multitude, and to his disciples, saying, "The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not. For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers" (Matthew 23:1–4).*

The lawyers, or scribes, held a privileged position in society during Jesus' time, respected as authorities on the interpretation of Mosaic Law in religious as well as secular affairs. Fulfilling the dual role of theologian and lawyer, they expounded the Torah to keep the populace in mind of the rules and regulations governing daily life.

Jesus denounced these scholarly experts in religious law as being the kind of teachers who bind heavy duties and financial burdens, hard to be borne, on the shoulders of passively compliant devotees un-

der the pretence of making them spiritual. But the scribes and Pharisees themselves could not bear any burden of such religious disciplines —not practising what they preached. In their hearts they were not spiritual, performing their religious works and ceremonies only for favourable effect and admiration.

It is no secret that in modern times as of old, there have been unscrupulous lawyers who for mercenary gain and winning their case have obscured truth by clever arguments and legal loopholes, freeing criminals and even sentencing the innocent to ruin or death. The law should be applied with wisdom as a means of supporting divine justice in society, not used as a self-serving expedient that subverts truth and causes suffering to good men.

Jesus noted that the scribes and Pharisees who nominally professed fealty to Moses and his precepts now occupied the Mosaic seat of authority in the temple, supposedly as custodians of the teachings of Moses. Therefore, Jesus advised his disciples to observe whatever good rules they were asked to follow (good rules are good rules even when imposed by unworthy teachers), but not to copy the hypocritical example of those teachers who emoted but emitted no actual works of piety.

*"Woe unto you! for ye build the sepulchres of the prophets, and your fathers killed them. Truly ye bear witness that ye allow the deeds of your fathers: for they indeed killed them, and ye build their sepulchres. Therefore also said the wisdom of God, 'I will send them prophets and apostles, and some of them they shall slay and persecute': That the blood of all the prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation; from the blood of Abel unto the blood of Zechariah, which perished between the altar and the temple: verily I say unto you, it shall be required of this generation.**

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* "The phrase 'wisdom of God' has been very puzzling, for the words spoken by Jesus are not found in any Old Testament book. Among the explanations, the best is that which represents Jesus as quoting the trend or tenor of several prophecies, such as II Chronicles 24:19–22 and 36:14–16, and Proverbs 1:20–33."—J. W. McGarvey and Philip Pendleton, *The Fourfold Gospel* (Cincinnati: Standard Publishing, 1914).

In light of recent discoveries, however, it is possible that Jesus was referring to some scriptural writing not included in the Bible as it has come down to our time. In

"Woe unto you, lawyers! for ye have taken away the key of knowledge: ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered" (Luke 11:47–52).

Parallel reference:

"But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in....

"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous, and say, 'If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets.' Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets. Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers. Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?

*"Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city: That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zechariah son of Berechiah, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar. Verily I say unto you, all these things shall come upon this generation" (Matthew 23:13, 29–36).**

The Dead Sea Scrolls: A New Translation by Michael Wise, Martin Abegg, Jr., and Edward Cook (HarperSanFrancisco, 1996), the authors state: "The scrolls have proven that some of the Jews of Jesus' day knew and used more than one form of the many biblical books....There was as yet no agreed upon 'canon' of the Bible. Which books would be included in the Bible and in what form or 'edition' had not yet been decided. Doubtless different Jews and groups of Jews would have made different selections of authoritative books. Many of the Dead Sea Scrolls, though not a part of our Bible today, were certainly regarded as holy and authoritative by at least some Second-Temple Jews. Only later, after 100 C.E., did a 'standard' version of the Bible emerge." *(Publisher's Note)*

* The version in the Gospel According to St. Matthew identifies Zechariah as the "son of Berechiah," the chronicler evidently confusing him with the author of the Book of Zechariah (see Zechariah 1:1). The incident referred to by Jesus, however, is recounted in II Chronicles 24:17–21: "Now after the death of Jehoiada came the princes of Judah, and made obeisance to the king. Then the king hearkened unto them. And they left the house of the Lord God of their fathers, and served groves and idols: and wrath

Jesus then further accused the scribes and Pharisees of hypocrisy "because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous"—those whom their fathers had slain—in an ostentatious sham of disowning the deeds of their forefathers. All the while, they harboured those same instincts inherited from their predecessors—was it not their intention to do the same to Jesus? He saw through their false posturing and compunctious disavowal of the bloody actions of their fathers: "If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers of the blood of the prophets!" However, their wicked tendencies akin to those of their forefathers seethed within them. Their own bad karmic propensities ordained them to attract a birth and socioreligious power in the tradition of their prophet-killing forefathers.

How the cumulative effects of good and evil actions affect the destiny of nations

"You human serpents, you generation of evildoers, you shall not escape the many hellish miseries gathering to beset your bodies, minds, and souls. According to the law of karma, the sins accruing from the wickedness born of the shedding of the righteous blood of prophets since the foundation of the world—from the blood of Abel and of Zechariah who perished before the altar of the temple—vibrates in the ether upon this present wicked generation and will cause untold miseries."

Evil apparently imbibed through heredity or the environment and status of one's birth is actually due to a person's own evil acts of past lives. The self-created tendencies thus brought into this life cannot be overcome by hypocritical, pompous, religious rites and observances; they can be erased only by repentance—the giving up of hypocrisy and bad habits—and by concentrating daily on the purification of the soul in devout meditation.

The cumulative evil effects (karma) resulting from the sins of evildoers against righteousness, so long as they remain uncorrected and

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came upon Judah and Jerusalem for this their trespass. Yet he sent prophets to them, to bring them again unto the Lord; and they testified against them: but they would not give ear.

"And the Spirit of God came upon Zechariah the son of Jehoiada the priest, which stood above the people, and said unto them, 'Thus saith God, "Why transgress ye the commandments of the Lord, that ye cannot prosper? Because ye have forsaken the Lord, He hath also forsaken you."' And they conspired against him, and stoned him with stones at the commandment of the king in the court of the house of the Lord."

uncompensated, vibrate in the ether through generations, a chief cause and exacerbation of famines, fires, epidemics, pestilence, earthquakes, wars, bloody feuds and strifes, debauchery and wickedness.* Just as disease germs spread by an unhygienic clan may persist and remain in a community even after the clansmen migrate away, so the sinful vibrating thoughts and tendencies created by the people of one generation in a place persist and continue in the next or many later generations. All the different modern races of people and nations and societies of the earth are composed in great part of the good and evil vibrations of their forefathers since the earth began.

As an individual is responsible for all the seeds of actions of his past lives, subtly stored up in his subconscious mind, so every individual race and nation and social and familial component thereof is heir to the past actions of its forefathers subtly accumulated in the subconscious mind—the mind-set—of that segment of humanity. For example, this is what contributes to racial differences—the Americans, utilitarians; Hindus of India, spiritual seekers; the English, colonists; the French, liberals; and so forth.

The Hindus love peace because their forefathers loved peace; and some of the Western nations are prone to dissension and fighting because of their warlike and unforgiving ancestry. Every generation suffers or prospers more or less according to some of the past actions of its forefathers. That is the principle Jesus referred to when he said: "The blood of all the prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world...shall be required of this generation."

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* A passage from the Old Testament book of Nehemiah (9:25–28) describes such treatment of the Hebrew prophets, part of the recurrent cycles of forgetfulness of God, karmic retribution, and subsequent repentance:

"And they took strong cities, and a fat land, and possessed houses full of all goods, wells digged, vineyards, and oliveyards, and fruit trees in abundance: so they did eat, and were filled, and became fat, and delighted themselves in Thy great goodness.

"Nevertheless they were disobedient, and rebelled against Thee, and cast Thy law behind their backs, and slew Thy prophets which testified against them to turn them to Thee, and they wrought great provocations. Therefore Thou deliveredst them into the hand of their enemies, who vexed them: and in the time of their trouble, when they cried unto Thee, Thou heardest them from heaven; and according to Thy manifold mercies Thou gavest them saviours, who saved them out of the hand of their enemies.

"But after they had rest, they did evil again before Thee: therefore leftest Thou them in the hand of their enemies, so that they had the dominion over them: yet when they returned, and cried unto Thee, Thou heardest them from heaven; and many times didst Thou deliver them according to Thy mercies."

Jesus spoke sternly to the scribes and Pharisees, in effect warning them: "Your hypocrisy and ill intent is drawing unto you untold sorrow and trouble! Through your ignorance and evil example that you impose on others, you close the door of opportunity for those around you who wish to enter the kingdom of heavenly Cosmic Consciousness. You throw away the key of divine knowledge I have offered to you, yourselves not trying to enter the heavenly kingdom by deep meditation and discipline, and thereby you also hinder others 'that were entering in.'"

"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves.

"Woe unto you ye blind guides, which say, 'Whosoever shall swear by the temple, it is nothing; but whosoever shall swear by the gold of the temple, he is a debtor!' Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gold, or the temple that sanctifieth the gold? And, 'Whosoever shall swear by the altar, it is nothing; but whosoever sweareth by the gift that is upon it, he is guilty.' Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gift, or the altar that sanctifieth the gift? Whoso therefore shall swear by the altar, sweareth by it, and by all things thereon. And whoso shall swear by the temple, sweareth by it, and by Him that dwelleth therein. And he that sweareth by heaven, sweareth by the throne of God, and by Him that sitteth thereon" (Matthew 23:15–22).*

"According to your evil karma, O you hypocritical leaders, you will attract great misery. You move heaven and earth to make a spiritual convert, but after he has followed your example he is twice as ignorant as yourselves—for the unfortunate one who follows your evil example adds to his ignorance the ignorance of your wicked ways."

The apparent practice of the religious authorities was to place paramount importance on the material offerings that filled their coffers —the gold used in the temple, the gifts upon the altar. Jesus viewed this practice as blameworthy and therefore corrected the misconception of "ye fools and blind." Though his response specifically addressed the

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* "Guilty" here is used in the archaic sixteenth-century sense of "owing payment."

Pharisees' perverted judgment about the relative sanctity of different types of oaths, metaphorically he intended a deeper lesson:

"Woe unto you" who defile the altar of the body and the temple of the soul by evil

"Spiritual woe befalls those ignorant spiritual guides who say that when anyone swears by the body, that is, when by evil habits one defiles the sanctity of the body-temple of the soul, it is of no evil consequence (because he apparently, or visibly, loses nothing). How foolish and blind are they who consider transgressions concerning gold (which is only physically useful) as more binding than the transgressions against the body temple, which alone gives value and usefulness to gold!

"Anyone who by evil actions or words defiles the altar of the body also defiles the Spirit's gift of soul therein. How can you believe that the altar of the body, which holds the soul-gift, is insignificant? Whoever defiles the altar of the body also dishonours the soul enshrined there. Likewise, whoever profanes the temple of the soul automatically treats sacrilegiously the Spirit which dwells there; and that person who by evil actions, words, or thoughts blasphemes against the vibrationless heavenly infinity, the throne of God, also blasphemes against God Himself who reigns there. The altar of the body and the soul residing there, and the temple of the soul and the Spirit in it, and heaven and the Heavenly Father therein—all are important; hence no one in action, words, or thought should transgress against their laws."

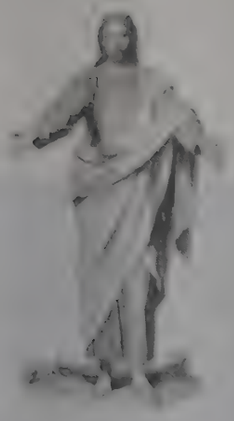
And as he said these things unto them, the scribes and the Pharisees began to urge him vehemently, and to provoke him to speak of many things: Laying wait for him, and seeking to catch something out of his mouth, that they might accuse him.

In the mean time, when there were gathered together an innumerable multitude of people, insomuch that they trode one upon another, he began to say unto his disciples first of all, "Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. For there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known. Therefore whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness shall be heard in the light; and that which ye have spoken in the ear in closets shall be proclaimed upon the housetops" (Luke 11:53 — 12:3).

To his disciples, Jesus spoke words of warning against the veiled cunning of hypocrisy: "As leaven secretly works in the rising of bread, so hypocrisy secretly inflates the ego and destroys minds and souls. No matter how people keep wickedness hidden behind the mask of feigned goodness, as do the Pharisees, still that wickedness will burst out from the guise that hides it and will make itself manifest to the world.

"Nothing can be hidden which will not be known. All good and bad motives and effects are ultimately revealed. Even wicked thoughts that people think and speak within themselves in the dark privacy of their minds vibrate in the ether and are registered there. Evil cannot contain itself; even when spoken or whispered in closets of secrecy, it is apt eventually to be known publicly."

God, who is omnipresent and omniscient, knows all things good and bad that quietly come and go in human minds and secret acts. There is nothing that can be hidden from Him; for even when a man takes with him to the grave long-held secrets, they are openly read by the all-seeing God. He who is the Mind of all minds and the Life of all the cosmos, knows everything that arises and dies in human consciousness, and in each tremor that happens in nature and in every speck of His empyrean universe.



DISCOURSE 56

God-realization: The Heavenly Treasure of Individuals and Nations

"God First": The Best Recipe for Individual, National, and International Well-Being

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Chaos and Calamities Can Be Averted by Practice of the Heavenly Ideals of Brotherhood

❖

The Father's "Good Pleasure": Divine Grace That Bestows Spiritual Emancipation

❖

Spiritual Meaning of the Parable of the Faithful and Wise Steward

❖

Watching the Bodily House to Prevent the Entry of the Thief of Delusion

❖

How to Retain a Watchful Awareness of the Inner Presence of God

"The earth would be a veritable heaven if nations as well as individuals would heed Jesus' admonition to make God the primary aim of life."

And one of the company said unto him, "Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me."

And he said unto him, "Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you?"

And he said unto them, "Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth."

And he spake a parable unto them, saying, "The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: And he thought within himself, saying, 'What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits?' And he said, 'This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry."'

"But God said unto him, 'Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?' So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."

And he said unto his disciples, "Therefore I say unto you, take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat; neither for the body, what ye shall put on. The life is more than meat, and the body is more than raiment.

"Consider the ravens: for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have storehouse nor barn; and God feedeth them: how much more are ye better than the fowls? And which of you with taking thought can add to his stature one cubit? If ye then be not able to do that thing which is least, why take ye thought for the rest?

"Consider the lilies, how they grow: they toil not, they spin not; and yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. If then God so clothe the grass, which is today in the field, and tomorrow is cast into the oven: how much more will He clothe you, O ye of little faith?

"And seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind. For all these things do the nations of the world seek after: and your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things. But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you.

"Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

"Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately. Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them.

"And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants. And this know, that if the goodman of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through. Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not."

Then Peter said unto him, "Lord, speakest thou this parable unto us, or even to all?"

And the Lord said, "Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Of a truth I say unto you, that he will make him ruler over all that he hath. But and if that servant say in his heart, 'My lord delayeth his coming'; and shall begin to beat the menservants and maidens, and to eat and drink, and to be

drunken; the lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers. And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.

"I am come to send fire on the earth; and what will I, if it be already kindled? But I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished! Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, nay; but rather division: For from henceforth there shall be five in one house divided, three against two, and two against three. The father shall be divided against the son, and the son against the father; the mother against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother; the mother in law against her daughter in law, and the daughter in law against her mother in law."

And he said also to the people, "When ye see a cloud rise out of the west, straightway ye say, 'There cometh a shower'; and so it is. And when ye see the south wind blow, ye say, 'There will be heat'; and it cometh to pass. Ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky and of the earth; but how is it that ye do not discern this time? Yea, and why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right?

"When thou goest with thine adversary to the magistrate, as thou art in the way, give diligence that thou mayest be delivered from him; lest he hale thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and the officer cast thee into prison. I tell thee, thou shalt not depart thence, till thou hast paid the very last mite."

—Luke 12:13–59

DISCOURSE 56

God-realization: The Heavenly Treasure of Individuals and Nations

And one of the company said unto him, "Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me."

And he said unto him, "Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you?" (Luke 12:13–14).

"Materially minded man, God and your karma judge your merit regarding the division of the inheritance in question. I am not come on earth to bother about the disposition of properties." God gave man a mind and a will to so order the welfare of his life. Jesus succinctly points out that God uses the precious lives of His prophets to grant spiritual enlightenment and liberation, not to relieve man of his own initiative and constructive activity to fulfil his worthy desires and make of his life what it should be.

And he said unto them, "Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth" (Luke 12:15).

Why covet material extravagance? It is quite usual for people who are excessively endowed to be also excessively unhappy; for their nervous system is entangled in caring for and worrying about their possessions, never feeling quite complete and satisfied, unable to enjoy what they do have.* Jesus also points out the great fallacy in thinking that life is made secure by possessions. He illustrates that point by the following parable.

> *And he spake a parable unto them, saying, "The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: And he thought within himself, saying, 'What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits?' And he said, 'This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry."'*
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> *"But God said unto him, 'Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?' So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God" (Luke 12:16–21).*

They are dupes of delusion who are lulled into spiritual complacency by the false security imparted by material wealth. Such persons are unwilling to learn from the millions who have laboured hard in the world for the rewards of possessions and prosperity, perhaps accumulating vast fortunes, only to find that affluence has made no significant deposits in the coffers of inner peace and joy. How foolish it is to store up treasures for the fleeting body, which at any moment can be taken away by death; it is wise to give one's primary effort to acquiring soul riches of lasting bliss, wisdom, and divine qualities through daily meditation and service to others, for this is an imperishable wealth from which one is never parted.

Jesus warns of the false security imparted by material wealth

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* Cf. Luke 6:24: "Woe unto you that are rich! for ye have received your consolation" (Discourse 33).

Material riches may attract coveted status in the eyes of the world, but they are useless at death. Spiritual riches may not engage worldly admiration, but they guarantee to the soul in the after-death state the true security of eternal freedom and happiness.

The covetous man wants to have more than the next person; but when he has it he is not satisfied, because inevitably he finds someone else with still more than he. People live in a bedlam of misery created by their desires. Materially, the average American has far more than the average citizen of Europe or India or any other nation; but still he is not happy! His satisfaction is seared with anxiety and worry and unending wants.

The very nature of *maya* conditions man to crave material acquisitions, when even a little observation would reveal their emptiness. Why waste one's years in pursuit of this or that, only to be disillusioned? Be happy now in contact with the inner kingdom of God. That is what Jesus urged; he lived that truth. His happiness was conditioned by nothing; even the body he willingly surrendered. In that inner detachment one is completely free, unaffected by either riches or poverty—changeless within, regardless of circumstances. Such a one enjoys whatever the Lord provides, yet knows in his inner self: "If I never see it again, that is all right." His soul is ever secure in a divine superabundance.

And he said unto his disciples, "Therefore I say unto you, take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat; neither for the body, what ye shall put on. The life is more than meat, and the body is more than raiment.

"Consider the ravens: for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have storehouse nor barn; and God feedeth them: how much more are ye better than the fowls? And which of you with taking thought can add to his stature one cubit? If ye then be not able to do that thing which is least, why take ye thought for the rest?

"Consider the lilies, how they grow: they toil not, they spin not; and yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. If then God so clothe the grass, which is today in the field, and tomorrow is cast into the oven: how much more will He clothe you, O ye of little faith?

> *"And seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind. For all these things do the nations of the world seek after: and your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things. But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Luke 12:22–31).**

The earth would be a veritable heaven if nations as well as individuals would heed Jesus' admonition to make God the primary aim of life. When people concentrate on political and business selfishness for national and personal accumulation of power and luxuries at the expense of others, the divine law of happiness and prosperity is broken, creating disorder and want in the family, the nation, the world. If the leaders of different nations, instead of extolling aggression and patriotic selfishness, turned the minds of their citizens toward the acquirement of inner peace, love of God and neighbour, and bliss of meditation, then material prosperity, health, and international harmony would automatically be added unto the spiritual treasures of the nations.

"God First": the best recipe for individual, national, and international well-being

Jesus pointed out the supreme wisdom of "God first" as the best recipe not only for individual happiness but also for national and international well-being: "The nations of the earth seek inordinately and selfishly after material prosperity and power, which inevitably leads to hurtful inequities, wars, and destruction. Let them rather seek God and add His principled righteousness to their endeavours, and live harmoniously beneath the canopy of international spiritual brotherhood.† On nations who live in peace with one another, and in pursuit of God-consciousness, the Heavenly Father bestows lasting prosperity, well-earned by aid to the world family, goodwill, and international business cooperation. God, who is the Provider of the cosmos, knows the needs of individuals and nations; if He feeds the raven and clothes

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* These words of Jesus are paralleled in Matthew 6:25–33 and are commented on in that context in Discourse 29, with emphasis on the individual application of this central teaching of Jesus. The commentary on the reprise of these verses in Luke expands their relevance to include, along with personal observance, a national and international obligation.

† "God hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth....That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him, though He be not far from every one of us: For in Him we live, and move, and have our being....For we are also His offspring" (Acts 17:26–28).

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Christ and the Rich Young Man

Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, "One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me."

And he was sad at the saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions.

—Mark 10:21–22

Jesus analyzed the young man who had obeyed the commandments yet lacked God-consciousness: He was in bondage to materialistic attachments. Jesus counseled him, succinctly and candidly: "Sell whatever thou hast" and "take up the cross"—adopt the liberating attitude of inner renunciation and those methods of self-discipline and meditation that free the mind from bondage to body and possessions; "and follow me"—follow the path my consciousness has taken through the door of the spiritual eye into Christ Consciousness, that you may join me in God's kingdom of everlasting life and bliss.

—Paramahansa Yogananda

Painting by Heinrich Hofmann

the lily, how much more would He provide everything to the individual and the nation who are in tune with His ideals!"

The state of money-mad modern civilisation distinctly shows that selfishness wrecks individual and national happiness. The excessive competitiveness of business life is pernicious because each one tries to take away the possessions of others. Thus in a community of 1,000 each businessperson has 999 enemies and competitors. Jesus urged people to share their possessions with all; when that law is observed, each person in a community of 1,000 has 999 helpers.

Survival in the present-day cutthroat commercial environment is so demanding that the businessperson is run ragged and is unable to concentrate on making his life truly and spiritually happy. Business is made for the happiness of man; man was not made for business. Only that much enterprise is necessary which does not interfere with the spiritual development of man. Advancement in science and technology is to be applauded when used for the betterment of the human race; but in practical application, nations of the earth could enhance the happiness of their citizens if they advocated a consciousness of plain living and high thinking—concentrating their minds more on spiritual development, inspirational literature, philosophy, knowledge of the wonders and workings of creation, and less on frenetic technologies that encourage money-madness.

If the nations of the earth did not complicate civilisation by industrial selfishness, which leads to overproduction and overconsumption in rich countries, and exploitation and parsimony toward weaker nations, then all peoples would have plenty to eat and to live well. But since patriotic selfishness and material superiority are the aims of almost all developed nations, regardless of the needs of their neighbours, the world suffers episodes of chaos and confusion of isms resulting in famine, poverty, and the avoidable miseries of wars. The events that have marked the first half of this twentieth century have manifestly shown that national security and prosperity can never be assured by patriotic and industrial selfishness, which have brought on economic disasters, two world wars, unemployment, fears, insecurity, starvation, and the natural calamities of earthquakes, hurricanes, droughts (which by the operation of mass karma are the indirect offspring of the accumulated evil actions of individuals and nations).

Chaos and calamities can be averted by practice of the heavenly ideals of brotherhood

Modern chaotic conditions the world over are the result of ungodly living. Individuals and nations can be protected from self-generated utter destruction if they live by heavenly ideals of brotherhood, industrial cooperation, and international exchange of earthly goods and spiritual experiences. The present economic system of profiteering and exploitation has failed; a brotherhood of nations and a brotherhood of necessary industries and industrialists can alone bring lasting prosperity to the world.

The Great Depression of the 1930s humbled many millionaires who were sure of their financial acumen to preserve their mighty fortunes. Even the shrewdest businessmen became bewildered children in the hands of destiny and depression, knowing not which way to turn. The spiritual laws of "unselfishness" and "including the prosperity of others in one's own prosperity" were broken; hence, the worldwide collapse of the industrialist economic system. Industrial selfishness was precipitated from dire human greed for gold, leading to unfair suicidal competition and the dumping of prices to destroy the competitor. When the materially minded businessman's brain is befuddled with greed, his intelligence institutes plans that fail one after the other. This is the price all materialistic God-forgetting egotists are bound to meet sometime or other.

By giving artificial monetary value to industrial production, man has created strife between capital and labour, systematically causing recurrent inflations and depressions. Capital and labour, like brain and limbs, should cooperate for the overall welfare of the body and soul of the nation, rather than fighting each other and thereby ensuring their own mutual destruction. Brain and hands both cooperate to maintain the body and share the food in the stomach; so also capital (the brains of society) and the labour (its hands and feet) must cooperate to make life prosperous and to share the bounty they produce. Neither capital nor labour should get special preference, avoiding the pitfalls of both imperialistic and socialistic forms of government. Capital and labour each has its confirmed place and both must do their respective duties in equality. Everybody should be provided food, clothing, shelter, education, and medical care through sharing of the national wealth; or everybody should equally shoulder the burden of poverty if it comes unavoidably through the inclemencies of nature. There should be no inequitable distribution of basic necessities for a progressive material, mental, and spiritual existence; the have-nots

against those who have is the root cause of crime, greed, selfishness, and other untold social evils.

A family member who becomes sick or disabled is not an object of charity, but honourably partakes of the family food and financial means. The same should hold good for each member of the world family. No one should starve because he is unable to find employment or because he is old or disabled. If the nations of the earth wanted to please God, they would live according to Christlike principles as brothers in a United States of the World, exchanging commodities so that no individual would suffer from lack, famine, or poverty.

It is imperative now that individuals and nations forsake selfishness to feed and clothe the international body. National citizenry should subdue preoccupation with self-interest and learn to acquire wisdom, and to meditate and be in tune with the Infinite, so that they collectively feed the national soul with all-round happiness. Nations living in tune with God and His ideals of brotherhood and peace can endure for centuries without wars or famine, in perpetual prosperity and spiritual happiness.* Nations who are rich in prosperity but

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* "The ideal of a well-rounded civilisation is not a chimerical one. For millenniums India was a land of both spiritual light and widespread material prosperity. The poverty of the last 200 years is, in India's long history, only a passing karmic phase. A byword in the world, century after century, was 'the riches of the Indies.' Abundance, material as well as spiritual, is a structural expression of *rita,* cosmic law or natural righteousness. There is no parsimony in the Divine, nor in Its goddess of phenomena, exuberant Nature.

"The records of history present India, up until the 18th century, as the world's wealthiest nation....The Bible refers to the riches of India, telling us (II Chronicles 9:21, 10) that the 'ships of Tarshish' brought to King Solomon 'gold and silver, ivory, apes, and peacocks' and 'algum [sandalwood] trees and precious stones' from Ophir (Sopara on the Bombay coast). Megasthenes, the Greek ambassador (4th century B.C.), has left us a detailed picture of India's prosperity. Pliny (1st century A.D.) tells us the Romans annually spent fifty million sesterces ($5,000,000) on imports from India, which was then a vast marine power.

"Chinese travellers wrote vividly of the opulent Indian civilisation, its widespread education and excellent government. The Chinese priest Fa-Hsien (5th century) tells us the Indian people were happy, honest, and prosperous. See Samuel Beal's *Buddhist Records of the Western World* (India was the 'Western world' to the Chinese!), Trubner, London; and Thomas Watter's *On Yuan Chwang's Travels in India, A.D. 629–45,* Royal Asiatic Society.

"Columbus, discovering the New World in the 15th century, was in reality seeking a shorter trade route to India. For centuries Europe was eager to possess the Indian exports—silks, fine cloths (of such sheerness as to deserve their descriptions: 'woven air' and 'invisible mist'), cotton prints, brocades, embroideries, rugs, cutlery, armour, ivory

lacking in wisdom and God-bliss may lose their top-heavy materiality through civil war, fights between capital and labour, and troubles with envious neighbours jealous of their prosperity. One nation possessing abundance side by side with another nation starving to death can never be a formula productive of peace on earth.

Nations must look after one another or they are doomed. That is why Jesus speaks to the nations of the earth: "O you nations, do not be selfish and think only of food, industry, and raiment, in utter forgetfulness of brotherhood and God, the Giver of all things, or you will bring self-created disaster on yourselves through your ignorance and its attendant wars, pestilence, and other miseries."

Prosperity often dulls the social conscience: "What do we care for other nations: We worked to create our prosperity so that we could roll in plenty! Why should they not do the same?" Callous arrogance is shortsighted. Enduring national prosperity depends not only upon natural resources and the initiative of the nation's citizens, but primarily upon the moral conduct, harmony, and spiritual living of the people. No matter how successful a nation may be, if it becomes debauched, selfish, and inharmonious, it will have civil wars, treachery, and foreign aggression to disrupt its complacency and good fortune.

Hence, the admonition of Jesus that no individual or nation should be selfish and give entire thought to food or raiment or acquirement of earthly treasure, but should be humble, share prosperity with needy brothers, and acknowledge God as the only Owner and Giver of all the gifts of the earth.

> *"Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth cor-*

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and ivory work, perfumes, incense, sandalwood, potteries, medicinal drugs and unguents, indigo, rice, spices, coral, gold, silver, pearls, rubies, emeralds, and diamonds.

"Portuguese and Italian merchants have recorded their awe at the fabulous magnificence throughout the empire of Vijayanagar (1336–1565). The glory of its capital was described by the Arabian ambassador Razzak as 'such that eye has not seen, nor has ear heard of, any place to equal it on earth'" (*Autobiography of a Yogi*, Chapter 49).

*rupteth. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Luke 12:32–34).**

"Fear not, my little band of disciples, for through your devotion you have justified yourself to the Father and He is pleased to give you the kingdom of Omnipresence, your birthright as His children, whom He has made in His image."

Jesus' words point out that though the devotee's personal effort is required to realize the image of God within his soul, spiritual emancipation is ultimately dependent upon divine grace, "your Father's good pleasure." No one can wrest the spiritual kingdom from God solely by following spiritual law, for the Heavenly Father reserves the right to give salvation when He thinks fit. Every man is bound to recover his divinity, even though he be deeply buried beneath the debris of incarnations of delusion. It has been the "good pleasure" of the Heavenly Father to stamp His perfect image in the soul of all His human children; and when they forsake their identification with their human nature and bring out their perfect divine image, then and then only the Heavenly Father is pleased to receive His prodigal children back in His kingdom of immortality.

The Father's "good pleasure": divine grace that bestows spiritual emancipation

Jesus goes on to enunciate the duty of the devotee of absolute renunciation who seeks God alone, and toward that end forsakes everything else:

"As your single-hearted desire is to know God, for which you have chosen to follow the path of renunciation, divest yourself of your earthly entanglements, sell your property and give the proceeds to serve a greater good and to help the poor and the needy. Do not put your trust in bags of material possessions that age and decay with use. Carry with you the ever new receptacle of meditation-woven intuition in which you store heavenly treasures of imperishable divine qualities—wisdom, bliss, consciousness of Omnipresence—which will never fail you. Such treasure cannot be pilfered by the thief of death or destroyed by the moth of time. Worldly people look for security in the uncertainties of material pleasures and acquisitions, but let your heart be concentrated on your meditation-acquired everlasting joy of God-realization."

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* Cf. commentary on Saint Matthew's version of these verses (Matthew 6:19–21; see Discourse 28).

"Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; then when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately. Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them.

"And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants. And this know, that if the goodman of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through. Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not."

Then Peter said unto him, "Lord, speakest thou this parable unto us, or even to all?"

And the Lord said, "Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Of a truth I say unto you, that he will make him ruler over all that he hath. But and if that servant say in his heart, 'My lord delayeth his coming'; and shall begin to beat the menservants and maidens, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken; the lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers. And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more" (Luke 12:35–48).

Parallel references:

"But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and

would not have suffered his house to be broken up. Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh. Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Verily I say unto you, that he shall make him ruler over all his goods. But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, 'My lord delayeth his coming'; and shall begin to smite his fellowservants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; the lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, and shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 24:43–51).

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"Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is. For the Son of man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch. Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning: lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you I say unto all, watch" (Mark 13:33–37).

66 Keep your spiritual will ready and concentrated within on the lights, or stars, in the spinal centres by which you can lead your consciousness from finite body identification to the Infinite—sending your consciousness and life force through these centres of light into Spirit. Be true devotees waiting attentively for the divine Cosmic Consciousness to be manifest in your bodily house, after that Cosmic Consciousness returns from its wedded unity with all nature and thus distinctly makes itself manifest through your consciousness without the hidden covering of nature's manifestations.

Spiritual meaning of the parable of the faithful and wise steward

"When the Cosmic Consciousness comes and knocks at the gates of the devotee's intuition, it must be expectantly received with devotion. Those devotee-servants of God are blessed with eternal

emancipation when the Cosmic Consciousness arrives in their consciousness and finds them diligently alert with wisdom and watchfulness, ready to receive God and disband ignorance.

"Verily I declare by the truth that I feel within me, when God shall thus come to those faithful devotees, He will serve them with a repast of true wisdom and divine communion. And when He comes twice or thrice and is received in the same watchful consciousness of the devotees, they will be blessed with spiritual freedom for having passed all the tests of divine communion.

"That devotee is a worthy servant who keeps his bodily and mental house well guarded with wisdom, allowing no opportunity for the thief of ignorance suddenly to break through his consciousness and steal his spiritual qualities. Just as a stealthy thief is unable to take by surprise a watchful servant, so also the faithful devotee remains at all times ready for any sudden, subtle coming of the "Son of man," a manifestation or experience of the Christ Consciousness, or realization of the infinite Christ Consciousness as incarnate in the body as the soul, the divine Self through whose emergence and intuition God is realized.

"The true devotee is always patient and persevering, devotionally prepared for the Divine Visitation, no matter when it comes unannounced; but the fitfully wise devotee, sometimes attentive but then slipping into restless inattention, often misses the opportune moment of spiritual manifestation. That servant who is unceasingly faithful and constantly wise and watchful is made master by the Lord God of the spiritualized bodily and mental house, with the duty of overseeing the servant-senses, controlling and sustaining them with the proper dole of the meat of wisdom. That servant-devotee who is consistent in governing all his faculties with wisdom finds complete self-mastery over himself by the permanent contact of the innate Lordly Christ Consciousness.

"But the careless and whimsical devotee does not meditate dutifully every day, thinking that his lapses matter little because of a delay in the manifestation of God-consciousness. Sensing no immediate need to resume his labourious spiritual obligations, he rather momentarily regresses and ill-treats his servant-senses and insults and misuses the maidens of his fine feelings to enjoy sense objects and therewith becomes drunk with delusion. Because of the devotee's intermittent worthy endeavour, the innate Christ Consciousness may come someday to manifest consciously to him; but finding him spiritually negligent and

unheeding, will instead separate and go away from the careless consciousness. That devotee, whose devotion had erstwhile given him some contact of God but which was now lost through negligence, becomes classed with the unbelievers who never have God-communion.

"The devotee who intuitively felt God's will and did not prepare himself to obey that will and to meet the divine tests in order to do so, shall find himself lashed by self-doubts and the acute remorse of losing God after finding Him. But that devotee who errs because he is yet unmindful of the joyous fulfilment of God's coming will suffer less. Much watchfulness and spiritual sanctity is required of devotees with wisdom, just as men expect much from responsible social leaders."

Three classes of spiritual advancement

First, Jesus speaks of advanced devotees who should never lower their consciousness by giving undue attention to the body, but should concentrate on the seven receptacles of divine consciousness and energy in the spine and brain so that they might never be invaded by ignorance, but be always ready to receive the manifestation of God. The Lord is hidden behind His consort, Nature, busy with creation, but He will disband all delusions of natural phenomena and reveal Himself as light and Cosmic Consciousness to the true devotee "when He will return from the wedding" of Spirit and Nature.*

Secondly, Jesus speaks of those devotees who have some God-perception, but whose spiritual equilibrium is yet unstable. God may come, owing to the devotee's spasmodic devotion, but go away if He finds the devotee at that moment negligent and careless, and indulging in the senses. Those devotees who have consciously experienced the manifestation of God and yet toy with sensory temptations find that in their dereliction they have missed an unexpected visitation of God because of His precipitous departure from their unprepared consciousness. For having found God, the Emancipator of the universe, and then suddenly losing Him, the mental suffering of the slothful devotee is acute—"That servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes."

God always responds to the devotee's devotion; but if the devotee mixes his spiritual aspirations with an unspiritual life, God goes away after granting the devotee a mere glimpse of Himself. Even so, that

* See also explanation of metaphysical significance of "the Bridegroom," Discourse 16.

tantalizing touch of the Lord should encourage a more sustained divine effort. Multitudes do not believe that the actual contact of God is possible; but the accomplished yet careless devotee knows differently, even if for only a little while. His suffering at losing God is a reminder that he will be able to know God permanently by forsaking wayward unspiritual habits.

Then Jesus speaks of the third class of devotees, those who follow spiritual rules mechanically—"he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes." If by chance such devotees contact God for a trice in meditation, they do not suffer much for losing Him, because of lack of depth in their spiritual feeling for God.

God never inflicts "stripes" on His devotees, but they cause themselves pangs of suffering through their own folly in which they lose God after once having some contact with Him.

It is not difficult to attract some inner perception or feeling of God's presence when the devotee's devotion is ripe. But to maintain constant contact with God, the devotee must be ever watchful of his consciousness, practicing the presence of God in wakefulness and remaining in that awareness even in the states of deep sleep and dreams. Any devotee who emphasizes any bodily or mental activity that preempts an inner focus of wholehearted concentration on God cannot retain Him permanently.

The soul has the authority to discipline its servant-senses. Each sense is given a special assignment, and the intuition has the important work of watching the bodily house to prevent it from being invaded by the thief of cosmic delusion. The "Son of man," the Christ Consciousness incarnate and operative in the body as the soul, is ever present though hidden deep behind cosmic delusion. The servant-senses should be kept alert for that unknown hour when the master, the Christ within, owner of the bodily house, manifests, lest it find the servant-faculties sleeping the sleep of delusion.

Watching the bodily house to prevent the entry of the thief of delusion

The sincere devotee is duty-bound to keep the bodily house impervious to invasion by the thief of delusion, preventing it from being broken into and ravaged by misery and ignorance. The faithful and wise devotee becomes the divinely appointed chief steward over his household of senses, and nourishes them with the meat of discipline

and wisdom when they have reached the "season," or state, of soul willingness to be good. Blessed is that devotee when the Christ Consciousness manifests and finds him meditating and properly governing his sensory servants. That spiritually watchful devotee, having rightly guided all the senses, will also have control of the properties of soul qualities, and with them all requisite material power.

By contrast, the negligent devotee succumbs to a feeling that his meditation is useless, as God continues to delay manifesting within him. He thus starts smiting his well-behaved senses with the rod of temptations, and goads them to enjoy sense pleasures, joining with them in drunken delusion. If a Divine Visitation manifests within him due to his past good actions, at that time when he is least expectant and prepared that experience will be summarily severed from his consciousness. He will find himself classed as a hypocrite because he made a pretence of performing appointed spiritual duties and yet in his heart he was not convinced that spiritual perseverance would result in God-consciousness. He will weep and be furious at himself for the weaknesses that have led to his isolation from God.

How to retain a watchful awareness of the inner presence of God

The highest spiritual habit by which the devotee can retain a watchful awareness of the inner presence of God is to keep the consciousness always centred on the spiritual eye. The ordinary person's mind is habitually restless, given primarily to worldly matters, which by their changeful kinetic nature dissipate the attention. What is necessary is to balance life's duties with meditation on God, by which one learns to focus the mind in a most wonderful way. When a spiritually equilibrated person wants to accomplish a task, he is able to concentrate the full power of his disciplined attention on it, and it is done! When the concentration is fixed on God, its outward expression is a dynamic force for accomplishment.

Earnest devotees must create the spiritual habit of thinking of God throughout the day. Even when working or talking or mixing with others, one can keep the mind resting in Him. There is an inward stillness and peace that the world cannot ruffle. When one is cushioned in the habit of practising the presence of God, the sharp barbs of mortal habits of body consciousness have no piercing effect. Each night in meditation, the devotee should close his eyes to the world and practise deep meditation and prayer: "Lord, I have been dragging the

body all day long. Give me freedom in Thy consciousness." The mind will argue that meditation is a drudgery in darkness, but one must persevere. He who with faith and perseverance enters the silence each night, and again each morning, will find great reward of abiding peace and calmness, precursor to the unveiled manifestation of the Infinite Presence.

Therefore it behoves all devotees to be determined acolytes of meditation, and always to keep the altar of devotion aglow in the temple of the soul, so that no matter when God suddenly manifests, His subtle coming will be detected and received by the devotee. The sage-poet Tagore wrote: "Have you not heard His silent steps? He comes, comes, ever comes."* It is the perpetual spiritual vigil and devotional magnetic expectation of the devotee that hears these silent steps of God's presence.

"I am come to send fire on the earth; and what will I, if it be already kindled? But I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished! Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, nay; but rather division: For from henceforth there shall be five in one house divided, three against two, and two against three. The father shall be divided against the son, and the son against the father; the mother against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother; the mother in law against her daughter in law, and the daughter in law against her mother in law."

And he said also to the people, "When ye see a cloud rise out of the west, straightway ye say, 'There cometh a shower'; and so it is. And when ye see the south wind blow, ye say, 'There will be heat'; and it cometh to pass. Ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky and of the earth; but how is it that ye do not discern this time? Yea, and why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right?" (Luke 12:49–57).†

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* From *Gitanjali* by Rabindranath Tagore (New York: Macmillan and Co., 1916).

† For this second paragraph of verses (Luke 12:54–56), see also commentary on parallel reference in Matthew 16:2–3 (Discourse 44).

66 I am come on earth to spread the fire of wisdom, which will mercilessly burn all barriers of ignorance. Now that fire is already kindled; how can I feel satisfied until the flame of wisdom conflagrates all dark delusion that shuts God out from the lives of His earthly children? Some of you think that I have come on earth only to give peace; you are mistaken, for my wisdom is going to create also division between the good and the bad. Those who follow me in truth and understanding will separate themselves from those who live in darkness. Peace cannot reign in a family where some members follow my Truth teachings and others persist in views fostered by satanic delusion.*

Messengers of God's wisdom bring the fiery vibration of manifested Truth

"O you who so easily read the signs of nature to foretell the coming weather, why do you not understand the significance of this time of revelation of God's word through me; and why do you not judge for yourselves, uninfluenced by the ignorance of others, what is right?"

Divine messengers are God's living fire on earth. They are as a flame of enlightenment, not of chastisement; thus Jesus prevented his disciples when they wanted to "command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them"† who opposed the works of Jesus. The wisdom-fire of which Jesus spoke was the Christ Intelligence incarnate in him. In that manifested Wisdom is the vibratory light and power of Spirit, the true "baptism to be baptized with." John the Baptist had said of Jesus: "He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire: whose fan is in his hand, and he will throughly purge his floor, and will gather the wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."‡

Wisdom, the fiery vibration of manifested Truth, gives peace and emancipation to those who are in tune with it, but burns those who behave contrarily.§ A fire handled properly gives warmth and light,

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* See also commentary on Matthew 10:34–36 (Discourse 41): "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household."

† Luke 9:54 (Discourse 49).

‡ Matthew 3:11–12.

§ "'Is not My word like as a fire?' saith the Lord; 'and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?'" (Jeremiah 23:29).

but scorches any who touch it in careless disregard for its power. True devotees harmonize themselves with truth by raising their vibration through spiritual discipline, and thus remain in tune with its blessings. But ignorant persons who go against truth by wrongdoing make themselves miserable by friction with the universal law of cause and effect.

> *"When thou goest with thine adversary to the magistrate, as thou art in the way, give diligence that thou mayest be delivered from him; lest he hale thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and the officer cast thee into prison. I tell thee, thou shalt not depart thence, till thou hast paid the very last mite" (Luke 12:58–59).**

Jesus warns of the karmic consequences of wrongdoing, acting without spiritual discrimination. Any devotee who in his introspection finds that his adversary, his bad karma from past evil actions, has arraigned him before the magistrate of the cosmic law of cause and effect, must pray for deliverance from reaping the results of his bad actions; for most people condemned by the judge of cosmic law are delivered into the prison of suffering by the officers of karmic tendencies arising from evil actions. Jesus then admonishes: "I tell you that you cannot get away from the tribunal of the cosmic law of cause and effect governing all human actions until you have paid fully by working out your evil karma through suffering, reformation, and prayer."

Man can be partially and in time wholly free from the effects of his evil karma if with sincere devotion he continuously prays deeply for pardon to the framer of cosmic law, the Supreme Divine Jurist, man's ultimate recourse to contravening grace and redemption.

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* These verses are paralleled in Matthew 5:23–26, and are commented on in that context in Discourse 27.

DISCOURSE 57

Will Few or the Many Find Salvation?

Jesus Affirms the Role of the Guru in the Disciple's Liberation

How the Intercession of a Guru Mitigates the Effects of Past Bad Karma

❖

Without the Saving Grace of the Guru, the Disciple Is Unable to Enter God's Kingdom

❖

The Fate of Devotees Who Ignore the Guidance of a God-Ordained Guru

❖

Heaven Can Be Attained by All, Regardless of Race, Caste, or Creed

❖

Do Liberated Masters Accrue Karma for the Work They Do on Earth?

"All who strive to enter into the kingdom of Cosmic Consciousness by availing themselves of the help of a guru and his liberating spiritual techniques will find the strait gate and narrow way of Self-realization into the Infinite."

There were present at that season some that told him of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices.

And Jesus answering said unto them, "Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."

He spake also this parable; "A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, 'Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?'

"And he answering said unto him, 'Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it: And if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down.'"

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And he went through the cities and villages, teaching, and journeying toward Jerusalem. Then said one unto him, "Lord, are there few that be saved?"

And he said unto them, "Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able. When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, 'Lord, Lord, open unto us'; and he shall answer and say unto you, 'I know you not whence ye are':

"Then shall ye begin to say, 'We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets.'

"But he shall say, 'I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity.'

"There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out. And they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God. And, behold, there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last."

The same day there came certain of the Pharisees, saying unto him, "Get thee out, and depart hence: for Herod will kill thee."

And he said unto them, "Go ye, and tell that fox, 'Behold, I cast out devils, and I do cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I shall be perfected.' Nevertheless I must walk today, and tomorrow, and the day following: for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem.

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate: and verily I say unto you, ye shall not see me, until the time come when ye shall say, 'Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.'"

—Luke 13:1–9, 22–35*

* Verses 10–17 are commented on in Discourse 32. Verses 18–21 are covered in Discourse 37 with their parallels from the Gospel According to St. Matthew.

DISCOURSE 57

Will Few or the Many Find Salvation?

Jesus Affirms the Role of the Guru in the Disciple's Liberation

There were present at that season some that told him of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices.

And Jesus answering said unto them, "Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13:1–5).

Jesus, elucidating the operation of the karmic law of cause and effect, here corrects an error of supposition in those who thought that the persons who had died at the hands of Pilate or because of the falling of the tower must have been great sinners to have met such a fate. Jesus knew that the persons to whom he was speaking were themselves transgressors, and that justice according to the karmic law awaited them.

Uncaught lawbreakers should not think themselves less guilty than those convicted and punished for their crime, for they will perforce pay the commensurate penalty when apprehended.

In fact, Jesus' words were intended to disabuse his listeners of the notion that the mere circumstances of a person's death, whether resulting from the decree of society's laws or from an accident, could simplistically be interpreted to gauge one's sinfulness. The removal of one's physical body from the earth plane by death, freeing that soul to move on to the astral realms, obviously is not always the result of iniquity. Nor does God's law of karma mandate an unnatural physical death as the sole prescribed punishment for all offenders of righteousness. Some who live for years, even endowed with health and prosperity, might in fact be more egregious transgressors against divine law than those whose bodies suffer or are killed.

The karmic recompense of sin is not physical death, but spiritual death

However, sin certainly causes spiritual death: obliviousness to the bliss and immortality of the soul. Sin brings torture of conscience and corroding inner mental punishment, suffering that is sometimes more painful than physical death. So Jesus cautions, "Do not presume that the slain individuals were greater sinners than yourselves. Unless you mend your ways and forsake your evil actions, your iniquities will be the death of your spiritual life." His words are a warning against the complacency of persons who assume they are sufficiently virtuous because they have thus far been spared misfortune visited upon others. Asleep in ignorance, they never analyse themselves or make an effort to spiritualize their lives until rudely awakened by physical, mental, or spiritual suffering—karmic recompense that could assuredly be lessened or averted by repentance and cultivation of God-consciousness now.

He spake also this parable; "A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, 'Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?'

"And he answering said unto him, 'Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it: And if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down'" (Luke 13:6–9).

66 A sinner, through repentance and prayer and the grace of God, gained the companionship of a guru-preceptor and his band of virtuous devotees. God expected that sinner to augment the good karma that had brought him into that spiritual environment (adding to it as necessary to merit remaining there) by reforming himself and producing some tangible fruits of virtue in his life. But when after some time had passed and the devotee evinced no improvement, the Lord, through His law of karma, spoke or vibrated into being the circumstances that were the lawful consequence of that devotee's slothfulness: 'It is needless to keep the unheeding sinner in the company of the good. Let him be thrown out.'

How the intercession of a guru mitigates the effects of past bad karma

"But the God-sent guru, the embodiment of the Heavenly Father's noble wish to redeem His children, prayed that the sinner, further stimulated with inspirations and divine grace, be allowed to dwell with the virtuous devotees for one more year, giving that devotee another chance to produce in himself the fruits of Godward progress: 'Heavenly Father, I will specially implant some of Your wisdom in this errant soul, and fertilize his spiritual growth with discipline and with divine love. If he does not improve or repent within a year, then I will have to let his karma take its course and send him away.'"

In this parable, Jesus illustrates the power of the guru to intercede and help a misguided disciple from suffering dire results of past evil actions. The "vineyard" refers to the good disciples; the "fig tree" represents the lagging disciple; and the "dresser" symbolizes the guru, whose discipline carefully tends to the cultivation of the fruits of God-realization on the boughs of their lives.* The intercession of the guru who is in tune with God can mitigate past karma that might otherwise hold back or even destroy a disciple's spiritual life.

The importance of the guru's blessing I learned early as a youth (before I met my own Master) from a true story told to me by Swami Pranabananda, a great disciple of Lahiri Mahasaya (guru of my guru).†

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* "What a responsibility one assumes when he tries to improve people! The rose in the vase looks beautiful; one forgets all the gardening work that helped to make it beautiful. And if one must take pains in order to have a lovely rose, how much more effort is required to produce a perfect human being!"—*Sayings of Paramahansa Yogananda* (published by Yogoda Satsanga Society of India).

† See "The Saint With Two Bodies," a full account of my meeting with the revered Swami Pranabananda, Chapter 3 in *Autobiography of a Yogi*.

He and another disciple used to meditate together for eight hours every night, when silence reigned over the bustling city of Banaras. He had had visions of saints and other wondrous perceptions, but there was always some barrier that kept from him the final vision of God.

Lahiri Mahasaya continued to encourage him to "Meditate deeply; the obstructions of past karma must be overcome." But after so many years of ever-increasingly deepening meditation, still the longed-for "final irrevocable union" was not forthcoming; he began to feel an unbearable spiritual anguish.

One night he was determined to wrest from his Guru a promise of divine intercession on his behalf. A promise of God-union, tearing away obscuring veils of delusion by forgiveness of past errors, is not given lightly. Lahiri Mahasaya tried to stave off his disciple's persistence with his accustomed response: "What can I do? You must meditate more profoundly." But Pranabananda's yearning could not be deterred. He continued to make his case, lovingly demanding as a son would do to convince his mother to gain from her some favour. After long hours of his imploring the guru, at last Lahiri Mahasaya blessed him and said, "You may go now and meditate. I have interceded for you with Brahma."*

The uplifted disciple returned to his home. "In meditation that night," he told me, "the Goal of my life was achieved. Never from that day has the Blissful Creator remained hidden from my eyes behind any screen of delusion." For the illumined Swami, even meditation was no longer requisite for the perception of Spirit.

The Hindu scriptures say, "The flower falls when the fruit appears." The flowers of meditation and prayer must be conscientiously nurtured to blossom in the garden of the devotee's consciousness; but when the fruit of God-realization comes, the flowers of meditation and prayer, having served their purpose, wither away. The Self-realized devotee who has arrived at the very last state of Cosmic Consciousness in *nirvikalpa samadhi* no longer has to engage in the meditative process of divine attainment. The avatar Bhagavan Krishna asked one of his devotees, the sainted Draupadi, why she did not meditate, the yoga way of divine union for attaining salvation. She replied, "O

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* Spirit in Its aspect of God the Creator. When Emerson's poem "Brahma" appeared in the *Atlantic Monthly* in 1857, most of the readers were bewildered. Emerson chuckled. "Tell them," he said, "to say 'Jehovah' instead of 'Brahma' and they will not feel any perplexity."

Krishna, my mind is day and night so engrossed in the Lord fully manifest in you that I cannot pull my thoughts away to practice meditation." The devotee, having perfect oneness with the Spirit in omnipresence and as incarnate in Krishna, had transcended the need for further application of the yoga science.

That being said, it should also be noted that even fully realized masters, especially if actively engaged on the outer world stage, continue the practice of prayer and meditation to set an example of guidance and inspiration, and to rejuvenate the bodily instrument through which they bestow great power of spiritual blessing and healing energy on those they serve. This has ofttimes been cited in the story of Jesus.

Devotees who have not reached the final union must not cozy themselves in illusions of God-attainment, imagining they have earned a retirement pension from the labours of cultivating God-consciousness. Swami Pranabananda, for example, did not attain emancipation just by eight years of long hours of deep meditation. His liberating karma had been accruing for several lives of devout endeavour. Even so, his final union with the Infinite remained obstructed by some stubborn bonds of past negative karma until the intercession of Lahiri Mahasaya, the guru sent by God to lift his soul into the Infinite Presence.

Devotees who in their present life have a strong inclination to seek God and are attracted to the path of meditation have surely meditated and practised inner divine communion in one or more of their recent past lives. Conversely, there are millions who never think of meditation, or are otherwise loath to attempt its discipline, owing to unwillingness born of materialistic living of past incarnations. Anyone blessed with spiritual tendencies ought to be very much encouraged to further with more and more concentrated meditation the accumulated devotional efforts of incarnations that will surely in time yield the longed-for contact of God.*

No devotee can bargain with his meditative efforts to convince God to manifest Himself. The devotee must forsake metaphysical egotism, which consists in thinking: "I have meditated so much, and God is therefore obliged to reveal Himself." Along with deep, sustained

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* "By diligently following his path, the yogi, perfected by the efforts of many births, is purged of sin (karmic taint) and finally enters the Supreme Beatitude. The yogi is deemed greater than body-disciplining ascetics, greater even than the followers of the path of wisdom or of the path of action; be thou, O Arjuna, a yogi!" (*God Talks With Arjuna: The Bhagavad Gita* VI:45–46).

meditation, there must be devotion and surrender to God. It is when the devotee casts the net of unconditional love again and again in the depths of meditation that God can be caught as a willing captive. Becoming steadfast in repeated experiences of God-contact, and with the aid of the guru's blessing, the devotee receives at last ultimate emancipation and irrevocable union with the Infinite Beloved.

And he went through the cities and villages, teaching, and journeying toward Jerusalem. Then said one unto him, "Lord, are there few that be saved?"

And he said unto them, "Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able. When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, 'Lord, Lord, open unto us'; and he shall answer and say unto you, 'I know you not whence ye are':

"Then shall ye begin to say, 'We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets.'

"But he shall say, 'I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity'" (Luke 13:22–27).

In these verses, Jesus highlights the importance of following one's divinely ordained guru, he who stands as the saviour or redeemer of one's soul from delusion. The blessing, the intercession, of the guru is of paramount importance. The guru—one who is "master of the house" in his unity with the universal Christ Consciousness—opens the inner "door" to transcendence and salvation.* "Enter in at the strait gate," for without the saving grace of the guru, "many...will seek to enter (into the heavenly kingdom of Cosmic Consciousness) and shall not be able."

Without the saving grace of the guru, the disciple is unable to enter God's kingdom

"Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it," Jesus had said in the Sermon on the

* "I (the God-united Christ Consciousness in me) am the door of the sheep....by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture" (John 10:7, 9; see Discourse 52).

Mount.* The Hindu scriptures similarly speak of the path to liberation as being as narrow as a razor's edge. Successful progress demands single-hearted focus on the goal, for one never knows when some distracting lure of delusion will activate dormant tendencies of the seeker's past bad karma and try to lead him astray. Satan works constantly to divert the devotee from the do's and don'ts of the Godward path, insinuating the thought that one is thereby exercising his independence. But persons in thrall to the ego with its karmic accumulation of habits and desires are anything but independent, and are rarely able to adopt the right course for themselves. Nevertheless, an even more potent influence than one's karma is the help and blessing of a God-knowing guru. Through reverent observance of the guidance of a master, one can free himself from all embedded compulsions of past karma.

To be faithful to the principles of the divinely ordained guru-disciple relationship is the sure way to reach God. Whereas the unguided devotee wanders into spiritual difficulties and disillusionment, the disciple who gives loyalty and obedience to one who has found God makes the spiritual path simple and straightforward. His devotion and faith establish constant inner attunement, so that regardless of any assaults of Satan, he can rely on the hidden and open aid of his Christ-like master to keep him safe and steady in his progress toward freedom.

That is the basis of Jesus' response to the question, "Lord, are there few that be saved?" The reply signified: "All who strive to enter into the kingdom of Cosmic Consciousness by availing themselves of the help of a guru and his liberating spiritual techniques will find the strait gate and narrow way of Self-realization into the Infinite. But there will be many, I say unto you, who will seek to enter the kingdom of God by themselves, after ignoring the God-given guru sent to them. They will not succeed because they did not heed God's divine messenger.

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* Matthew 7:14 (see Discourse 30). The "strait gate" and "narrow way" are among the many uses by Jesus of the double entendre in his teachings: the "strait gate" of virtuous inclinations, and the "narrow way" of the spiritual disciplines of righteous actions; so also, metaphysically, these phrases refer to the gateway in the subtle astral centre at the base of the spine, which opens into the astral spine's narrow, extremely fine pathway through which the life and consciousness ascend to the higher cerebrospinal centres of spiritual perception—the singular path of ascension to Christ consciousness and union with God in cosmic consciousness. In these present verses, both meanings are again intended in the context of the guidance and blessing of the guru who not only leads the disciple through the strait gate of the path of virtue, but also ultimately opens the inner astral door of ascension to God.

"When once the 'master of the house,' the Christlike guru, is taken away from the earth, he has to shut the door of his teaching—no further revelations or personal guidance issue from his silenced voice. Those who had the opportunity to benefit from his physical presence, but who failed to cultivate enduring attunement with the master, because of abject rejection of him, disloyal or treacherous behaviour, or preference for the company of their bad habits and inclinations, will find the master's channel of intercession has been shut to them.* If some then belatedly knock at the door of prayer, the master replies through their conscience, 'You had the opportunity to receive me, but you did not; wherefore I cannot now accept you.' Then shall those persons remind the master of their erstwhile acquaintance with him, 'Lord, we ate and drank in your presence when you taught in our midst. Why should you not respond to our prayers?' The master will intimate through the conscience of the supplicators, 'Because you rejected me and would not enter the door of salvation I opened for you, I know you not as sincere and faithful devotees. You are banished by the iniquity of your own works of ignorance.'"†

The fate of devotees who ignore the guidance of a God-ordained guru

Jesus sought to awaken those of his time to the magnitude of divine blessing afforded them in the readily accessible presence of God in his incarnate Christ Consciousness. To follow a master with Christ Consciousness who has lived and taught in an earthly incarnation is the only way to receive the sure guidance and intercession necessary for final introduction into the kingdom of God. The Lord does not teach seekers from His Formless Omnipresence, but uses the speech,

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* See also commentary on John 7:33–34: "Yet a little while am I with you, and then I go unto Him that sent me. Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me: and where I am, thither ye cannot come" (Discourse 50).

† Jesus repeatedly voiced such warnings to those who rejected him as one sent by God: "Not every one that saith unto me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, 'Lord, Lord....' And then will I profess unto them, 'I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity'" (Matthew 7:21–23; see commentary in Discourse 30).

This point is further explained later (in the present Discourse) in the commentary on Luke 13:35: "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate: and verily I say unto you, ye shall not see me, until the time come when ye shall say, 'Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.'"

mind, and consciousness of an illumined master in whom His Christ Intelligence has been incarnated. True masters have fully surrendered themselves to God, so He also surrenders Himself as infinite wisdom and love to these masters; He calls undeveloped truth-seekers to come unto Him through these perfect divine representatives.

Oftentimes guru and disciple are incarnate at the same time or in a close proximity of time. But masters with a world mission (or sometimes with many disciples in divergent stages of development) leave on earth a legacy of their teachings and ideals when they shed their mortal forms. For masters who can span the infinity of omnipresence, there is no difference between their seen and unseen presence, or in the blessings they bestow on disciples who are in tune, whether during or after the earth life of the master.

Thus Jesus could not have meant that the door of his divine intercession would be closed after he had left the body. Rather he warned that when a disciple spurns a God-sent guru owing to his own unsettled mental state of disbelief, or the fickleness of a change of heart, or inner weakness that yields to the iniquities of the delusion-loving ego, then that devotee's salvation is delayed. He has to roam one or more incarnations until karmically he prepares himself to locate the same discarded God-ordained guru-messenger. To dishonour the messenger of God is to dishonour God Himself. No doubt the Lord says to wayward devotees who appeal to Him for guidance, "Why are you seeking My aid again, when you refused the help I already sent to you through your guru?"

Those devotees who ignored the channel of salvation sent to them by God will in time realize, in an anguish of fruitless seeking, that they are bereft of divine guidance, not only in that life, but in the heavenly astral afterlife as well. However, if in the next life, or in some succeeding incarnation, that self-inflicted punishment of spiritual unfulfilment causes a devotee to renew and sustain his spiritual efforts, preparing himself to be a worthy, receptive disciple, then he will find through earnest prayer and meditation that God has again sent His divine messenger for that devotee's redemption.

Jesus said, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day."* This is a true statement of a guru, and seekers should realize its importance. Every emissary of God has God behind him. The guru does not issue

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* John 6:44 (see Discourse 43).

a summons to souls to become his disciples; it is God who calls and ordains that sacred relationship. When a soul, thus called by God, follows the guidance of the representative of God, that soul is bound to reach the Beloved Infinite. Out of this material world and dance of life and death, the Eternal Father is persistently trying to bring His children unto Himself again. Those who have ears to hear, let them hear; for this is divine truth, the only way by which one receives final liberation in God. The blind cannot lead the blind; only those who are fully illumined with the presence of God can be true shepherds of souls. Superficial seekers, wandering from one pasture of new ideas to another, become lost and spiritually malnourished while gorged with an undigested mixture of half-truths and useless dogma. Jesus decried those unstable devotees who failed in their blind ignorance to recognise and receive him as a saviour sent in their own time to open the way to God.

"There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out" (Luke 13:28).

No one can even casually meet his God-ordained guru without possessing good karma. Therefore, even a negligent devotee who has ignored the full measure of his guru's guidance, if he later repents and desires sincerely to know God, may have a sufficient store of good karma, or develop it by persistency in meditation and cultivation of spiritual qualities, to draw close to heaven. Such a devotee may have a glimpse of higher heavenly realms when he leaves the body at death; but that is all he can get. He may behold liberated saints and advanced devotees who followed their guru—"Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets"—permanently lodged in Cosmic Consciousness, but he himself will not be able at that time to enter that highest kingdom of God. He will in great anguish of spirit be "thrust out," back to earth—the place of spiritual repentance and endeavour contrived for man to perfect himself. There he must embrace again the disciplinary path of his God-given guru and pray for his intercession to find salvation.

Devotees who in the afterlife in the astral world have even a glimpse of the supernal heavens are blessed thereby with an intense longing to attain the kingdom of God. When such souls reincarnate, they have

from birth an innate compelling desire to know God. By prayer and good action and spiritual seeking, their yearning draws them again to where they left off in their relationship with their rightful guru, who stands ever ready to show them the path into the Heavenly Kingdom.

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Matthew 8:11–12 offers a comparable variant of this verse in Luke:

> *"And I say unto you, that many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 8:11–12).*

This rendering alludes to devotees who are sufficiently advanced to enter the highest spheres of heaven inhabited by divine souls. But after some time in the blissful kingdom, their unfinished earthly karma casts them again into the "outer darkness" of the delusive region of material embodiment. Entrapped again on earth, these souls are filled with a melancholy of dim unformed remembrances of paradise lost. They feel subconsciously a resentment, a dispassion, toward the sham offerings of the world—a spiritual agony of divine longing, which the saints refer to as sweet sorrow—which turns them toward deeper spiritual endeavour.

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> *"And they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God. And, behold, there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last" (Luke 13:29–30).**

66 I prophesy that in future many devotees shall arise in the eastern part of the world, in the western part of the world, in the northern part of the world, and in the southern part of the world, and by their devotion they will be drawn to true gurus and learn the proper

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* "Last shall be first": Cf. parallel references in Matthew 19:30 and 20:16 (Discourse 63).

science of meditation by which they will place their consciousness in the cosmic consciousness of God the Father. And behold, among those devotees there will be many that 'are last,' slower than others to start on the path to liberation, but who will persevere so devoutly in meditation that they 'shall be first' among their spiritual contemporaries to enter into the kingdom of Cosmic Consciousness. And there will be many that 'are first,' eagerly starting early on the spiritual path, but who will not be regular and deep in their meditation; they 'shall be last,' long delayed but ultimately successful if they persist, in final attainment of Cosmic Consciousness."

Heaven can be attained by all, regardless of race, caste, or creed

In the above words, Jesus gives hope of heaven to all prodigal children of God, in each of whom—regardless of race, caste, or creed—is hidden the potential Divine Image. Responding to the question, "Can only a few enter the kingdom of God?" he did not limit the number or make heaven the monopoly of a few spiritual aristocrats. Nor does he speak of God's kingdom as the exclusive reward of members of any particular faith. Rather, Jesus included sincere seekers after Truth who would be found in all the four corners of the earth and who would attract to themselves a God-sent guru through whose guidance and intercession they would "enter in at the strait gate" and be led through the spiritual-eye door into Cosmic Consciousness.

They will attain who remain resolute in the divine path from the time they first start until they successfully reach the end. According to Jesus, what matters is not whether one begins early or late on the spiritual path, but one's conscientious perseverance.

In a competitive examination, many who were first to enter the course may be the last to pass, and many who are last to register may stand first in the examination, through earnest application. Devotees whose spiritual enthusiasm is uniform and constant from start to finish will be the "first" to attain Cosmic Consciousness. But those devotees who are first in eagerness to enter the spiritual path and then become slothful might take more than one incarnation to at last enter Cosmic Consciousness and attain final emancipation.

Jesus assures truth-seekers that they all will surely find God, and that their progress begins when they give up their prodigal roaming in the land of ignorance and material consciousness and follow the lead of their God-knowing guru. All human beings, even the blatant

sinners, will in time repent when they understand their folly. Those who forsake their evil actions and fervently try to follow the spiritual path will certainly be ushered by their God-given saviour into the transcendental state of Cosmic Consciousness; they will finally be able "to sit down in the kingdom of God," to permanently establish their consciousness in Cosmic Consciousness.

The same day there came certain of the Pharisees, saying unto him, "Get thee out, and depart hence: for Herod will kill thee."

*And he said unto them, "Go ye, and tell that fox, 'Behold, I cast out devils, and I do cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I shall be perfected.' Nevertheless I must walk today, and tomorrow, and the day following: for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem.**

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate: and verily I say unto you, ye shall not see me, until the time come when ye shall say, 'Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord'" (Luke 13:31–35).†

With divine foreknowledge, Jesus replied: "Go and tell that cunning Herod that I have come to cast out ignorance and devils during a certain period of time as ordained by the Heavenly Father; and after that, but not before, I will be crucified. Then I shall be perfected through the help of the Father, 'on the third day' of curing myself in the astral world, unloosening the threefold karmic bonds of my physical, astral, and causal bodies that held my soul incarnate. In spite of the wicked Herod and all his power, I will walk free 'today, and tomorrow, and the day following' and so on until the time of my death comes, for none can balk me until that divinely foretold karma-ordained moment has arrived."

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* Commentator John Gill explains that this is "because the great Sanhedrin only sat at Jerusalem, to whom it belonged to try and judge a prophet; and if found false, to condemn him, and put him to death."

† Cf. parallel reference in Matthew 23:37–39.

Jesus' statement, "On the third day I shall be perfected," makes evident his dual human-divine nature, the condition of every master who descends to earth for a God-given mission. All souls are in essence divine, but as long as they are in fleshly embodiment they are constrained by characteristic imperfections of delusive manifestation—to a greater or lesser degree depending on the individualized being's state of spiritual evolution. Undeveloped worldly persons, because of their bodily attachments and desires, amass much karma of delusion. Even divine incarnations, though their souls have been fully liberated, must subject themselves to at least some measure of cosmic delusion simply to maintain a finite form separate from Spirit.

Do liberated masters accrue karma for the work they do on earth?

The "karma" thus accrued by liberated masters is the natural working of the cause-effect principle governing all actions in the realm of manifestation; it may also consist of unfinished works of their previous incarnations, such as helping to liberate their advanced disciples, or to state anew and revive truth, or even to toy with some passing fancy, renounced and forgotten, but which God in loving, whimsical wisdom deigns to fulfil.* Masters can work out or otherwise negate their karma by prayer and acts of divine will in meditation or in the afterlife spiritual realms, both of which forms of release were employed by Jesus.

Thus the "karma" of masters does not bind their liberated souls, but rather serves as earth ties that cling loosely to saviours who choose to spend their freedom doing good on earth, either from God's heavenly kingdom or by periodic reincarnations. Their human karma may be said to be like burnt rope; it appears to bind, but when so willed it falls away in ashes.

Jesus was conscious throughout his mission that according to the law of cause and effect his divine works and words (taking the karma of many he cured and offending the laws of both religious and secular authorities) would surely lead to crucifixion of his body. His divine nature was inwardly established in the consciousness of "I and my

* For example, Lahiri Mahasaya had, in a previous incarnation, entertained a desire to enjoy the beauties of a palace. Though he had long since transcended bondage to delusive personal desires, being a fully liberated master, the Divine Will saw fit to fulfil that wish in a miraculous way. See "Materialising a Palace in the Himalayas," *Autobiography of a Yogi,* Chapter 34.

Father are one"; but his human nature acknowledged that the irrevocable attainment of absolute unity with the Father would not occur until he dissolved the voluntarily assumed delusion-matrix of his physical, astral, and causal embodiments—and the karma they had accumulated—the final effort of which would take place during the three days, or stages of purification, following his crucifixion.

Jesus regretted that the people of Jerusalem, a city hallowed by prophets of God, had great opportunity in those divine messengers and in himself to be saved, but they did not care to listen to wisdom:

"O people of Jerusalem, marked with a history of killing prophets and stoning those who are sent by God,* how readily I would have gathered you under my divine protection, as a hen would protect her brood under her wings! But you were unwilling to be saved from the ravages of your ignorance. Because of this, you will find the houses of your lives left empty and desolate, for you will be unable to feel me as the Christ Consciousness in everything with the fullness of Its infinite love, wisdom, and bliss.

"O Jerusalem, ye people of the world who do not appreciate me as the Infinite Christ incarnate in this body called Jesus, someday you will seek me as that Christ Consciousness, but you will not be successful until you have repented of your material ways and attained spiritual development. The omnipresent Christ Consciousness, which appeared in the consciousness of this body of Jesus, will henceforth remain unmanifested to you until through meditation you expand your own consciousness sufficiently to say, 'Blessed is he (the bliss-filled Christ Consciousness) who cometh (is revealed to the intuitive perception of the devotee who has attuned himself) in the name of the Lord (through the Holy Ghost *Aum* Vibration, heard in the inner stillness of meditation).' The Christ Consciousness, which became manifest in me in this age, will manifest a second time in your meditation-expanded consciousness. Then and then only will you be able to realize my true infinite nature, as well as have a vision of my body in which Christ Consciousness has been templed."

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* "Stoning the prophets" is recounted in II Chronicles 24:17–21 (cited in Discourse 55). See also I Kings 19:10, prophet Elijah's words to God: "The children of Israel have forsaken Thy covenant, thrown down Thine altars, and slain Thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away."

DISCOURSE 58

Jesus' Parables on Humility and Discipleship, and the Parable of the Prodigal Son

Humility Is the Natural Expression of Every Soul Who Knows God

❖

Responding to God's Invitation to Partake of the Feast of Liberating Wisdom

❖

There Is Rejoicing in Heaven When an Error-Stricken Soul Turns Toward God

❖

Deeper Spiritual Meaning of the Parable of the Prodigal Son

❖

Even the Most Wicked Person Can Become a Saint by Unshakable Resolution to Find God

"Being both Father and Mother....unconditionally, wholeheartedly, God loves His untold generations of children and becomes anxious when even one of them becomes temporarily lost. The great love of God for his devotees is beautifully and wondrously expressed by Jesus."

And it came to pass, *as he went into the house of one of the chief Pharisees to eat bread on the Sabbath day, that they watched him. And, behold, there was a certain man before him which had the dropsy.*

And Jesus answering spake unto the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath day?" And they held their peace. And he took him, and healed him, and let him go; and answered them, saying, "Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fallen into a pit, and will not straightway pull him out on the Sabbath day?" And they could not answer him again to these things.

And he put forth a parable to those which were bidden, when he marked how they chose out the chief rooms; saying unto them, "When thou art bidden of any man to a wedding, sit not down in the highest room; lest a more honourable man than thou be bidden of him; and he that bade thee and him come and say to thee, 'Give this man place'; and thou begin with shame to take the lowest room. But when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room; that when he that bade thee cometh, he may say unto thee, 'Friend, go up higher': then shalt thou have worship in the presence of them that sit at meat with thee. For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

Then said he also to him that bade him, "When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor thy rich neighbours; lest they also bid thee again, and a recompence be made thee. But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind: And thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just."

And when one of them that sat at meat with him heard these things, he said unto him, "Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God."

Then said he unto him, "A certain man made a great supper, and bade many: And sent his servant at supper time to

say to them that were bidden, 'Come; for all things are now ready.' And they all with one consent began to make excuse. The first said unto him, 'I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused.'

"And another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused.' And another said, 'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.' So that servant came, and shewed his lord these things.

"Then the master of the house being angry said to his servant, 'Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind.' And the servant said, 'Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room.'

And the lord said unto the servant, 'Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. For I say unto you, that none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper.'"

And there went great multitudes with him: and he turned, and said unto them, "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple. For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, saying, 'This man began to build, and was not able to finish.'

"Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace.

"So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple. Salt is good: but if the

salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be seasoned? It is neither fit for the land, nor yet for the dunghill; but men cast it out. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear."

Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him. And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, "This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them."

And he spake this parable unto them, saying, "What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, 'Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost.'

"I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.

"Either what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find it? And when she hath found it, she calleth her friends and her neighbours together, saying, 'Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which I had lost.' Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth."

And he said, "A certain man had two sons: And the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me.' And he divided unto them his living. And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living.

"And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want. And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him.

"And when he came to himself, he said, 'How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants."' And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.

"And the son said unto him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.' But the father said to his servants, 'Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry: For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.' And they began to be merry.

"Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard musick and dancing. And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant. And he said unto him, 'Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound.'

"And he was angry, and would not go in: therefore came his father out, and entreated him. And he answering said to his father, 'Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment: and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends: But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf.' And he said unto him, 'Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine. It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.'"

—Luke 14:1—15:32

DISCOURSE 58

Jesus' Parables on Humility and Discipleship, and the Parable of the Prodigal Son

And it came to pass, as he went into the house of one of the chief Pharisees to eat bread on the Sabbath day, that they watched him. And, behold, there was a certain man before him which had the dropsy.

And Jesus answering spake unto the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath day?" And they held their peace. And he took him, and healed him, and let him go; and answered them, saying, "Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fallen into a pit, and will not straightway pull him out on the Sabbath day?" And they could not answer him again to these things (Luke 14:1–6).

To the many in the assembly who were hypocritical in their pretensions about strict Sabbath observance, Jesus pointed out that there is no time unsuitable to do good; he then refuted their silent opposition and healed the sick man.

And he put forth a parable to those which were bidden, when he marked how they chose out the chief rooms; saying unto them,

*"When thou art bidden of any man to a wedding, sit not down in the highest room; lest a more honourable man than thou be bidden of him; and he that bade thee and him come and say to thee, 'Give this man place'; and thou begin with shame to take the lowest room. But when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room; that when he that bade thee cometh, he may say unto thee, 'Friend, go up higher': then shalt thou have worship in the presence of them that sit at meat with thee. For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted" (Luke 14:7–11).**

Divine law is the revealer of truth and the exposer of deceit: He who pretends to be greater than he is will surely be found out in the mirror of public criticism; while he who is truly great, but whose nobility is hidden beneath a veil of humbleness, will be discovered and admired. Everyone whose "greatness" is fabricated by his own grandiose imagination will sooner or later find his pretensions exposed and dishonoured before the scrutinizing gaze of the very persons whose attention he draws to himself. He who is naturally humble in the satisfaction of his soul is saturated with divine magnetism; even though seeking no acclaim, he automatically attracts to himself the appreciative recognition of man and God.

Humility is the natural expression of every soul who knows God

The sincere devotee is interested in the approbation of the Lord, not the esteem of mortals. Those who put themselves forward as spiritual paragons, whether as devotees or teachers, are effectively declaring their lack of godliness, for "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble."† The minute one becomes puffed up, God flies away.

Jesus chided the status-seeking dinner guests, pointing out that the satanic delusion of egotism debases a man, while humility elevates him. The Omnipotent Lord, great as He is, never puts Himself for-

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* Jesus repeats this last statement in other contexts in Luke 18:14 (see Discourse 61) and Matthew 23:12 (see Discourse 55). Cf. also Matthew 18:4, "Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven" (see Discourse 47).

† James 4:6.

ward—humbly concealing His majesty and all-powerful will lest in awe His children fear to use the freedom of choice He has given to them.* The ignorant cast Him aside; but He is exalted and praised as the Most High in the heart-shrine of the devotee's freely given love. Humbleness flows like a fountain from the realization of God, expressing naturally through every soul consciously identified with Spirit.

As a person who appears to be humble may not in fact possess real humility, so also a person who objectively remarks about his attainments or is conscious of his good qualities cannot necessarily be accused of egotism. In contrast to persons who put on a veneer of humbleness in order to pretend to be great when they are not so, people who are honest and straightforward, without affectation, may speak impersonally of their qualifications without egotistically overestimating themselves or fostering conceit.

King Janaka, a great saint of India, was worshipfully offering flowers at the shrine of God, when suddenly he started putting flowers on his own head, saying, "I bow to myself. I am the sustainer of the universe." That was not egotism; in ecstasy, he suddenly saw God in everybody and in himself too. The responsibility of all souls is to know in every circumstance that they are reflections of the Supreme. Egotism steals away all possibility of that realization; there must be complete renunciation of the ego in Spirit. When one identifies no longer with his little self but with his divine Self, he rejoices, as does God, to be the servant of all.

Then said he also to him that bade him, "When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor thy rich neighbours; lest they also bid thee again, and a recompence be made thee. But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind: and thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just" (Luke 14:12–14).

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* "In taking infinite pains to shroud with mystery His presence in the atoms of creation, the Creator could have had but one motive, one sensitive desire: that man seek Him only through free will. With what velvet glove of every humility has He not covered the iron hand of omnipotence!" (*Autobiography of a Yogi*, Chapter 24).

Jesus speaks of the spiritual uselessness of the then-prevailing custom of holding big feasts for the sake of social vanity, just to please and curry the favour of those who need no feeding. He decries concentrating on fickle social prestige through gala events that are socially profitable—favour for favour—but are of no spiritual benefit.

Rather, to use the money, time, and labour to feed the poor and aid the needy, from whom no reciprocity is possible, is to recognise and serve God selflessly in the body temples of the unfortunate.

In the words "resurrection of the just," Jesus points out that in due time, when the just actions of those who serve the poor and afflicted will be weighed and judged by the law of cause and effect, those unselfish ones will be karmically rewarded with power to attract goodwill and prosperity for themselves.

And when one of them that sat at meat with him heard these things, he said unto him, "Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God."

Then said he unto him, "A certain man made a great supper, and bade many: and sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, 'Come; for all things are now ready.' And they all with one consent began to make excuse. The first said unto him, 'I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused.'

"And another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused.' And another said, 'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.' So that servant came, and showed his lord these things.

"Then the master of the house being angry said to his servant, 'Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind.' And the servant said, 'Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room.'

*"And the lord said unto the servant, 'Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. For I say unto you, that none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper.'"**

* Jesus relates a similar parable in Matthew 22:1–14 (commented on in Discourse 65).

And there went great multitudes with him: and he turned, and said unto them, "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever does not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple. For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish.'

"Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace.

"So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:15–33).

"God sends from time to time a specific master who arranges a great spiritual feast of wisdom, and through the servant of magnetic divine vibrations he invites truth-seekers to attend. But the propitious opportunity is declined by many who make excuses because of preoccupation with material interests and engagements. When they intimate their inability to join the spiritual feast of wisdom offered by the master, he is sad for those invited truth-seekers who chose lesser material satisfaction in preference to being feted with unending spiritual happiness.

Responding to God's invitation to partake of the feast of liberating wisdom

"Then the master sends forth his servant of spiritual vibrations to invite selectively to his wisdom feast those who suffer the poverty of material disappointments but are spiritually rich in desire for God, those who are physically in need of healing but are spiritually whole in faith, those who are physically halt but spiritually progressive, those who are blinded by physical delusion but are eager for spiritual vision. The devoted servant of divine magnetism does as bidden, and still there is room for more in the vast feast of the master's wisdom.

"The master's servant of spiritual vibrations goes forth not only in the ether but in the devotee who has absorbed the master's teachings. He says to such devotees: 'Wherever you go, in the busy

highways and in the fields, with the compelling power of your spiritual example and words bring other truth-seekers to share in the great feast of wisdom I offer. All attending truth-seekers will be happily surfeited as I busy myself in serving them; but there shall be no partaking of the feast by those who were invited to join but spurned my offer to assist them, being preoccupied with their worldly attachments.'"

To those who followed after him, Jesus continued to elaborate the meaning of this parable:

"Thus if any person is invited to seek the universal intelligence of Christ Consciousness as made manifest in me, but is loath to give up his attachment to parental or conjugal or filial ties or to the duties and aspirations of material life, he cannot be a disciple-guest fit to be entertained with the all-emancipating divine wisdom. Whoever is not ready for the supreme sacrifice of his material consciousness, even unto martyrdom on the cross of his trials, cannot be my disciple-guest rejoicing in the feast of Spirit.*

"Anyone who sets out to build a tower and does not first calculate the price required to finish it, and who after laying the foundation stops because of lack of funds, is an object of ridicule. Likewise, a prudent king considers whether his army of ten thousand soldiers is able to fight successfully the twenty thousand soldiers of his enemy, or whether instead he must make overtures of peaceful concession.

"Similarly, every devotee who wants to make of his life a heaven-reaching tower of wisdom must reckon with the price to be paid in renunciation, self-discipline, and meditation. Every devotee who would retain the kingship of his soul must know how, with the help of God and the wisdom of a master, to develop his strength by meditation and spiritual company to fight and defeat his evil enemy habits and the powerful hordes of baneful tendencies invading his mind and body.

"Anyone who desires invitation to the sumptuous feast of liberating wisdom offered by a master must be able and willing to pay the price: sacrifice of 'all that he hath' in social, political, worldly, and physical ties with their mental and bodily habits of bondage. He is called a disciple who by self-discipline forsakes whatever material engagements oppose his joining the master's feast of wisdom."

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* See also commentary on parallel references in Matthew 10:37–38 (Discourse 41); and Matthew 16:24 and Mark 8:34 (Discourse 45).

Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him. And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, "This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them."

*And he spake this parable unto them, saying, "What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, 'Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost.'**

"I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.

"Either what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find it? And when she hath found it, she calleth her friends and her neighbours together, saying, 'Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which I had lost.' Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth" (Luke 15:1–10).

66 Is there any divine shepherd, even though he has a hundred obedient followers, who, finding one of them lost in the wilderness of temptation, does not search out, find, and save the lost one? Is it not natural for the guru, if he succeeds in finding and saving the lost disciple, to embrace him and rejoice for having rescued him from delusive destruction?"

There is rejoicing in heaven when an error-stricken soul turns toward God

One's God-appointed guru is usually born around the same time as some of his unredeemed disciples from past incarnations. He rejoices when he finds them. When he finds one who has been long lost in the wilderness of incarnations, he rejoices greatly.

"As a guru feels joy in recovering a lost disciple, so the Heavenly Father and liberated souls in heaven are filled with gladness when an

* Cf. parallel reference in Matthew 18:12–14 (Discourse 48).

error-stricken soul repents of past evil ways and tries to go back to the heavenly kingdom. The Heavenly Father rejoices over all virtuous souls, but it evokes a special joy in Him when He finds a lost soul returning to His kingdom.

"Just as a woman shares her gladness with her friends when she finds her lost coin with the aid of light from a candle, so God, losing a soul in the darkness of delusion, sends the light of good company, inner inspiration, and the guidance of the guru to save that soul when it longs to go back to the home of the Father. And when that soul returns to the kingdom of God-consciousness, having repented of past errors, the rejoicing of God is shared by His liberated souls in heaven."

Jesus compares the guru and his disciples to a shepherd and his sheep. The metaphor appealingly illustrates the protecting nature of the guru, who saves his disciples from the predation of the wolves of delusion and bad company. The disciples are compared to sheep for they follow the wise guidance of the master obediently, meekly, and humbly, joyously and innocently, with perfect faith. God desires His devotees to have these qualities of sheep, but not their animal stupidity!

The shepherd with a hundred sheep is happy with his flock; but if he loses one and then finds it, he has additional joy. The same holds true with a divine shepherd who rescues a disciple who has been lost in the world through disobedience, temptation, evil surroundings, and hidden bad karma.*

Jesus uses the metaphor of the woman and her pieces of silver to illustrate the feminine quality of deep feeling. A woman who cherishes with real feeling a little hoard of ten silver coins is emotionally upset at missing even a single piece, insignificant though the loss may seem; and she is exceedingly glad when she recovers it. When a man loses some money, his masculine quality of reason is intellectually aware of the extent of his loss, and if it is inconsequential, he does not feel con-

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* "The masters, the Good Shepherds of this world, come down from their high places and give their lives to searching for disciples who are lost in the darkness. They find them in desolate and dangerous places, arouse them, lift them to a divine shoulder, and bear them with rejoicing to a safe place in the fold. They feed them with celestial food and give them living water to drink, of which, if a man eat and drink, he shall live forever. They give them power to become the sons of God. They give their own lives, to the last ounce of flesh and the last drop of blood, for the redemption of the sheep who know their voice."—Sri Gyanamata, in *God Alone: The Life and Letters of a Saint* (published by Yogoda Satsanga Society of India).

cerned. Likewise Spirit, being both Father and Mother, is not only aware of the loss when one of His children wanders from His kingdom and knows objectively that that soul by cosmic law will in time return to Him; but also as the loving Mother, God feelingly desires to recover that child from delusion. Unconditionally, wholeheartedly, God loves His untold generations of children and becomes anxious when even one of them becomes temporarily lost.

The great love of God for his devotees is beautifully and wondrously expressed by Jesus in the revelation that the Lord, with His liberated angels and saints in heaven, rejoices when a sinning child repents of his follies and makes sincere effort to return to God's kingdom. This is illustrated also in the parable of the prodigal son as told by Jesus:

And he said, "A certain man had two sons: and the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me.' And he divided unto them his living. And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living.

"And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want. And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him.

"And when he came to himself, he said, 'How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants."' And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.

"And the son said unto him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.' But the father said to his servants, 'Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes

on his feet: And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry: For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.' And they began to be merry.

"Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard musick and dancing. And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant. And he said unto him, 'Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound.'

"And he was angry, and would not go in: therefore came his father out, and entreated him. And he answering said to his father, 'Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment: and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends: But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf.' And he said unto him, 'Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine. It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found'" (Luke 15:11–32).

Apart from the obvious, time-honoured moral of repentance and forgiveness, this parable bears also a deeper spiritual implication:

Deeper spiritual meaning of the parable of the prodigal son

"Two devotees were born on earth with great wisdom inherited from their spiritual actions of past lives and the grace of the Heavenly Father. The younger devotee was proud to possess the wealth of wisdom that fell to his lot and became overly confident and careless. With the riches of wisdom cached in his bosom, he journeyed into the far country of delusion and temptation and there wasted his virtuous qualities by identifying himself with the sense pleasures of the body. When he was long in delusion, under the influence of bad company, he encountered the mighty famine of inner suffering and longed to be nourished again by some food of wisdom, but could not find it in his drought-stricken life.

"He sought refuge with a good man who had devoted himself to disciplining a few unruly animalistic souls ('swine') by training them with some elementary moral instructions. The young devotee who had lost his wealth of wisdom by riotous living was so deeply repentant of

his evil ways that he was willing to receive even the 'husks' of rudimentary discipline; but it seemed that he could not find anything to satisfy his gnawing hunger for divine bread.

"When the young man by continued repentance forsook his identification with the senses and concentrated on his inner Self ('came to himself'), he introspected thus: 'My Heavenly Father has the inexhaustible supply of the bread of wisdom and divine bliss, and here I perish with hunger for peace, wisdom, and bliss. Now I will arise, lift my consciousness from the plane of sensations, and go back to my Father in the kingdom of Cosmic Consciousness and vibrate my inner intuitive prayers to Him: "Father, Heavenly Father, I have acted against the laws of heavenly happiness by indulging in sensory promiscuity. I have darkened with ignorance Thy true soul-image within me. So in my present consciousness, I cannot worthily call myself Thy son. Take me back and give me whatever insignificant position and duties I can do on earth to atone for my evil deeds."'

"Then this young devotee arose, lifted his consciousness toward Cosmic Consciousness (Father). When he was yet a great way off from the goal of Cosmic Consciousness due to his past debauchery, the Heavenly Father saw him resolutely advancing toward His kingdom. With unconditional love for that prodigal devotee, He showered him with divine consciousness of His blessed Presence, enveloping him with the omnipresent embrace of celestial bliss.

"The Heavenly Father thus received back the prodigal devotee into His glorious astral kingdom where countless advanced and liberated devotees reigned with His Heavenly Majesty. The Heavenly Father commanded His angels to bring forth for the young devotee the best robes of astral lights and inner perceptions to decorate his soul. The devotee was adorned with the diamond ring of truth; his feet shod with eternal power. There was festivity in the astral world for the return of the prodigal devotee, and he was offered the fatted calf of wisdom and divine bliss. The Heavenly Father told his angels, 'Let us all rejoice in communion with this devotee, for this My prodigal son was spiritually dead and is alive again evermore in My Cosmic Consciousness. He was lost in delusion and now is found, having retraced his consciousness to My home of Cosmic Consciousness.' And they all communed in the joy of blessedness.

"Now the elder brother of the young devotee was also roaming in the field of cosmic vision. As he went deep and came nearer to the

astral rejoicing, he heard the music of the spheres and the dancing of angels. In his vision he called one of the angels and asked why there was this special festivity in heaven. The angel replied, 'Thy prodigal brother who roamed in delusion has come back to the divine kingdom, and thy Heavenly Father has given him eternal blessings of wisdom and ever new bliss. The Heavenly Father is glad because your younger erring brother has regained his heavenly consciousness and is safe from long imprisonment in the karmic cycles of reincarnation.'

"When the elder devotee heard this he was puzzled and would not go near the presence of the Father. Therefore the Cosmic Consciousness approached him through his intuition with some spiritual thoughts and inner perceptions. But the elder devotee in his vision vibrated his perplexity: 'Heavenly Father, behold these many years I have honoured and worshipped Thee faithfully in Cosmic Consciousness; never have I broken Thy commandments nor transgressed Thy divine laws by even a desire for sense attachment, yet Thou never gave me such a demonstration of Thy blessings. But as soon as this prodigal son arrived in Thy kingdom, he who spoiled Thy gifts of wisdom by his profligacy, Thou hast offered him the fatted calf of wisdom to enjoy undeservedly.'

"The Heavenly Father vibrated the following intuitive wisdom into the heart of the misunderstanding advanced devotee: 'Devotee son, you are ever in My Cosmic Consciousness; and the feast of truth, including the fatted calf of wisdom, has always already been yours. You should not feel less because We felt it fit and proper to especially celebrate with cosmic joy for your own lost brother who was spiritually dead and is now divinely alive, back again in Our kingdom, enhancing Our joy as well as your joy. Rejoice!'"

In this parable, Jesus points out how greatly it pleases the Heavenly Father to see His children, once lost in material pleasures, back again in the heavenly bliss of deep meditation and celestial ecstasy. When Jesus says of the prodigal son: "When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him," he gives great assurance to suffering mankind that the Heavenly Father meets at least halfway the devotee who diligently and continuously prays to go back to the heavenly kingdom.

Jesus further notes that devotees who are already graced by God with divine consciousness should not compare their portion with the bestowal of the gifts of grace on any other devotee. Measure for

measure the unconditional love of God metes out in a timely manner that which is the divine inheritance reserved for each soul.

Every devotee who makes a supreme effort to know God will find, sooner or later, the Divine consciously responding to his prayers. It is to be remembered that God secretly answers every sincere prayer and blesses every spiritual aspiration and endeavour; it is the devotee who fails to recognise that response because it may not always be according to what he expected or hoped for. No devotee should feel discouraged if he receives no visible demonstration of God in response to his prayers. Only when God is convinced of the devotee's utmost sincerity and complete surrender will He consciously and demonstratively respond. Ceaselessly entreating the Lord to reveal Himself, the devotee should not be satisfied with one-sided prayers, but should continue until he consciously knows beyond doubt that his prayers have been heard and answered by the Heavenly Father.

Even the most wicked person can become a saint by unshakable resolution to find God

"Even a consummate evildoer who turns away from all else to worship Me exclusively may be counted among the good, because of his righteous resolve. He will fast become a virtuous man and obtain unending peace. Tell all assuredly, O Arjuna, that My devotee never perishes! Taking shelter in Me all beings can achieve the Supreme Fulfilment."*

Thus does the Bhagavad Gita offer divine hope to fallen prodigal children of God, seemingly helpless through misdeeds. No matter how noxious their evil, they can never destroy their inherent goodness. It is God who has become the finite expression of each soul. No matter how far man's life is pulled away from its divine Source by the outgoing force of evil, if he makes a conscious effort at righteous behaviour he will be drawn back to God by the stronger magnetism of God's love.

Thus even a wicked man, much abused by evil pleasures, may become a saint by sacred unshakable resolution. He reclaims his soul identity with God by single-minded meditation, by abandoning his ungodly ways (foregoing wrong company from without and wrong inclinations from within), and by withholding his attention from the bewitching sirens of material desires.

Such a person, by deeply meditating with adamant determination, gradually remembers the true divine image ever present within him.

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* *God Talks With Arjuna: The Bhagavad Gita* IX:30–32.

By continuous vigilance, he sheds the temporarily grafted evil from his outer body-bound consciousness. He forgets the acquired "second nature" of wickedness as soon as he realizes in ecstasy his eternal nature of goodness.

No matter how long a dreamer in dreamland deems himself a wicked man, on waking he becomes free from that identity. Even if a soul has passed through many incarnations of evil, its delusive habits fall away and are forgotten instantaneously as soon as that soul wakes up in ecstasy in realization of its ineradicable goodness. Every being came from God, and even in the forgetful dream of mortality everyone remains a potential sleeping God. Forsaking his lifelong obsessive imaginings of being a hopeless renegade, man should awaken himself in God.

DISCOURSE 59

"Ye Cannot Serve God and Mammon"

The Use and Misuse of Wealth

Divine Principles and Cosmic Laws
of Material Success and Prosperity

❖

In the Modern World, Love of Money
Is the Principal Tool of Delusion

❖

The Different Vibratory Regions of the Astral World
to Which Souls Go After Death

❖

Understanding the "Heaven" and "Hell"
Experienced in the After-Death State

"Shortsighted people of the world pursue God's ephemeral mundane gifts of material objects and pleasures in complete neglect of the Giver. ...Wise children of the Heavenly Father who discover that they are made in His image seek first His kingdom of eternal happiness hidden within."

And he said also unto his disciples, "There was a certain rich man, which had a steward; and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods. And he called him, and said unto him, 'How is it that I hear this of thee? Give an account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest be no longer steward.'

"Then the steward said within himself, 'What shall I do? for my lord taketh away from me the stewardship: I cannot dig; to beg I am ashamed. I am resolved what to do, that, when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses.'

"So he called every one of his lord's debtors unto him, and said unto the first, 'How much owest thou unto my lord?' And he said, 'An hundred measures of oil.' And he said unto him, 'Take thy bill, and sit down quickly, and write fifty.'

"Then said he to another, 'And how much owest thou?' And he said, 'An hundred measures of wheat.' And he said unto him, 'Take thy bill, and write fourscore.'

"And the lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely: for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light.

"And I say unto you, make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations. He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much. If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own?

"No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon."

And the Pharisees also, who were covetous, heard all these things: and they derided him.

And he said unto them, "Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that

which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God."...*

"There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, and desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores.

"And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; and in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.

"And he cried and said, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.'

"But Abraham said, 'Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence.'

"Then he said, 'I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house: For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment.'

"Abraham saith unto him, 'They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.'

"And he said, 'Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent.'

"And he said unto him, 'If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.'"

—Luke 16:1–31

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* Verses 16–18 of Luke 16 are omitted here. Verse 16 is commented on in Discourse 34 with its parallel in Matthew 11:12. Verse 17 is commented on in Discourse 27 with its parallel in Matthew 5:18. Verse 18 is commented on in Discourse 62 with its parallel in Matthew 19:9.

DISCOURSE 59

"Ye Cannot Serve God and Mammon"

The Use and Misuse of Wealth

And he said also unto his disciples, "There was a certain rich man, which had a steward; and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods. And he called him, and said unto him, 'How is it that I hear this of thee? Give an account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest be no longer steward.'

"Then the steward said within himself, 'What shall I do? for my lord taketh away from me the stewardship: I cannot dig; to beg I am ashamed. I am resolved what to do, that, when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses.'

"So he called every one of his lord's debtors unto him, and said unto the first, 'How much owest thou unto my lord?' And he said, 'An hundred measures of oil.' And he said unto him, 'Take thy bill, and sit down quickly, and write fifty.'

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"And the lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely: for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light.

"And I say unto you, make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you

into everlasting habitations. He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much. If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own?

"No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon."

And the Pharisees also, who were covetous, heard all these things: and they derided him.

And he said unto them, "Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God" (Luke 16:1–15).

Divine principles and cosmic laws of material success and prosperity

Among the medley of profound truths Jesus wove into the simple eloquence of his parables, the above verses focus on the requisite virtue of material uprightness for gaining everlasting spiritual riches. The dishonest steward, about to lose his position after his untrustworthy behaviour is exposed, extended his unscrupulous ways in dishonest schemes that benefited others in order to obtain from them favours that would secure his own future. So adroitly clever was the steward that his rich employer (himself skilled in the materialistic ways of success) could not but admire the shrewdness of his employee, even as he removed him from opportunity to embezzle further from his own treasury. The world lauds successful persons who follow its ways, but it will not share responsibility for the consequences.

Jesus points out that materially minded persons, "the children of this world," unethical and morally reprehensible though they may be, often exhibit more cleverness about practical affairs than spiritual persons ("the children of the light"). Thus Jesus counsels his followers not to be dullards in fulfilling their dutiful responsibilities and satisfying their material needs. God made this a bounteous universe to provide for His children. But ill-gotten gains are thievery from the infinite store; they bear a heavy price in compensatory forfeit of everlasting spiritual treasure.

"I say unto you," Jesus admonishes, "that since wealth ('unrighteous mammon') is a necessary resource in the conduct of material affairs, make yourselves friends of the divine principles and laws of material success and prosperity, that by attunement with those cosmic forces, no matter what setbacks may come to you, your good karma will always see to your welfare in this world and in the 'everlasting habitations' of heaven.

"Be faithful to God and Truth in small matters and you will cultivate the uprightness to be faithful under all conditions. But if you are dishonest in little things, you will be dishonest when tempted by more grievous offences. If you have been corrupt in tending to your material affairs, succumbing to selfishness, avarice, and deceit, neither man nor God will entrust to you true riches. And if you have not been faithful in the use of the cosmic gifts of life, sharing and aiding others to receive their rightful succour from the universal wealth, you will not be worthy to receive on earth or in heaven the manifestation of your own divine inheritance of all-fulfilling soul qualities.

"No one can be devoted to both righteousness and unrighteousness. You cannot follow God's way of truth, love, and service to all while simultaneously engaging in the unscrupulous pursuit of money or worldly power for selfish purposes. If you give yourself to the service of instant gratifications promised by the wealth of materialistic offerings, you will feel no significant aspiration for God-realization. But if you love God supremely, the evils of the world cannot hold you."*

Among the onlookers who had listened to the above words of Jesus to his disciples were Pharisees whose love for wealth and social standing belied their professed devotion to God. When they scorned Jesus' admonitions, he had additional words especially for them:

In the modern world, love of money is the principal tool of delusion

"You hypocrites, you justify your disreputable covetousness before the eyes of spiritually blind men. But Omniscient God, who is present right within your hearts, knows and judges your inner being. Earthly riches and human glory, esteemed so highly among materially minded people, are held basely insignificant by the wisdom of God. And those

* *Mammon* is an Aramaic word meaning "wealth." See also Discourse 29, commentary on Matthew 6:24 in which Jesus makes this same statement that man cannot serve both God and mammon.

who attain wealth and social eminence by vile unethical means are considered by Him to be very low."

Jesus mentions both the good as well as the evil that may result from material wealth. Money itself is brainless; it cannot be blamed as inherently evil. It brings good or evil only according to the noble or reprehensible use that people make of it. Money is used by both saints and bandits. Virtuous persons attract money by applying the divine laws governing material prosperity, and convert its value into sustaining life and helping others materially, mentally, and spiritually. Evildoers and the sense-enslaved pursue monetary gain by any expedient means, regardless of the harm or destruction inflicted on others, and employ their acquisition in all manner of selfish indulgence and depravity.

God-knowing sages have declared that the three strongest temptations of man are money, sex, and intoxicants. In earlier eras in undeveloped civilisations, sex and wine were the primary pitfalls; in our industrial age, with its dependence on finance in individual life and society at large, it may be said that money is the principal tool of delusion, for it buys wine, stimulates indulgence in evil sensory passions, and exerts a powerful hypnosis of self-importance and false security. Scriptural wisdom, which condemns worship of "unrighteous mammon," needs to be heeded by money-mad modern man.

Saint Paul echoed the teachings of Jesus: "They that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil....But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called."*

"There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: and there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, and desiring to be fed the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores.

*I Timothy 6:9–12.

"And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; and in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off and Lazarus in his bosom.

"And he cried and said, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.'

"But Abraham said, 'Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence.'

"Then he said, 'I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldst send him to my father's house: For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment.'

"Abraham saith unto him, 'They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.'

"And he said, 'Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent.'

"And he said unto him, 'If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead'" (Luke 16:19–31).

In the parable of the rich man and the beggar, Jesus alludes to the different vibratory regions of the astral world to which the virtuous and the wickedness-encrusted souls are attracted after death according to their self-earned merits or demerits:

The different vibratory regions of the astral world to which souls go after death

"The helpless beggar—a virtuous soul, though apparently forsaken by all—after death was conveyed by divine vibrations of the Holy Ghost ('angels of God') into the high astral regions where spiritual souls are received by advanced beings and liberated prophets—'Abraham's bosom.' But the rich man, who lived riotously with no effort to cultivate God-consciousness, found himself, in the after-death state, in the darksome vibratory region of the lower astral world where wicked or materially desirous souls undergo the torment of restless night-

mares after the oblivion of astral sleep that is the first stage after death.*

"In somnolent vision, the sinful man saw from afar with his astral perception the land where the astral body of Lazarus roamed with great souls, and his soul cried out through his astral voice, 'Father Abraham, have mercy and send Lazarus to me that by his astral presence and his finger of will dipped in the cooling waters of wisdom he may comfort me and cool my tongue of self-created wrong material vibrations that I brought here from my past wrongly lived earth life. I am tormented by the flames of my unfulfilled material desires and attachment cravings for fleshly existence.'

"Abraham replied, 'Son, remember that on earth you received your heart's desire for material prosperity; but being engrossed and engorged in it, you forgot God. Lazarus, though plagued with physical suffering, did not neglect to cultivate God-consciousness by the inner communion of prayer and meditation. The law of cause and effect ordains that as you did not labour for God-happiness in your earth life, you cannot claim a harvest of blessedness in the after-death state; while Lazarus now 'is comforted,' reaping the result of his spiritual actions: the ever new joy of the Great Comforter (the Holy Ghost, the Holy Vibration of God made manifest).

"'Besides, there is a great impervious gulf of dividing vibration that separates the dark grossly vibrating region of the slums of the astral land, to which you have been attracted, from the celestial vibratory realm where Lazarus and I dwell. Through your own evil actions, you chose your abode in the region where you have to live and breathe the stifling vibrations of your unfulfilled desires. Only by repentance and reformation will you find your freedom from recurrent cycles of wastrel living and consequent afterlife confinement in your darksome astral prison. As fish are conditioned to the gross vibration of water and cannot live in the rarefied gaseous atmosphere on dry land, so at present you cannot forsake your self-chosen astral region of gross vibrations and move to the fine astral region, where we live and breathe supernal vibrations of divine light and love and bliss. You are used to gross vibrations, so you have to remain in that stratum until you resolve to improve yourself and thus deserve to be promoted

* See Discourse 21, discussion of "Gabriel's trumpet" that resurrects souls after death into their karmically earned abodes in the astral world and next incarnation on earth.

to a more spiritual earth existence, and thence to the higher existence where we are. Astral beings of finer vibrations who live with us cannot reach you without divine permission, nor can any of you living in the lower regions come here without divine decree.'"

Describing the fate of the sense-attached rich man in this parable, Jesus gives a graphic warning to body-bound persons who are misusing the gifts of God by inordinately indulging material desires in utter forgetfulness of their need to regain their Father's everlasting kingdom of bliss. According to the law of cause and effect, in the after-death state such persons will live for a karmically determined time in a self-created hell in the astral world, bemoaning the loss of their sensate physical body, its comforting breath, sensory pleasures, unfulfilled desires, and the accustomed sustenance of favoured tasty foods (referred to in the parable in which the rich man "fared sumptuously every day"). They are unable to enjoy the divine state of ever new heavenly bliss they could have realized in the after-death state.

A graphic warning to body-bound sense slaves who neglect to develop spiritual consciousness

Shortsighted people of the world pursue God's ephemeral mundane gifts of material objects and pleasures in complete neglect of the Giver who is everlastingly useful to His seeking children. Wise children of the Heavenly Father who discover that they are made in His image seek first His kingdom of eternal happiness hidden within, and material things afterwards, realizing that no spurious material substitutes can ever alleviate the true happiness-thirst of the soul. That is why Jesus had said, "Bread the men of the world seek after; but ye who are wise, seek ye the kingdom of God first." He counselled all souls on earth to learn to live "not by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God," so that in the after-death state they would be already consciously familiar with living by the word of God, or Cosmic Vibration, and Cosmic Bliss.*

Great saints who voluntarily practise fasting, breathlessness and heart-control in the *samadhi* state of meditation, inner renunciation, body-aboveness, and other disciplines find that in the afterlife, rather than experiencing the loss of the body as a sort of anguish in the denial of earthly sensations and comforts, they consciously enjoy unfettered perceptions of wondrous bliss and freedom. Body-bound persons, on

* See Discourse 8.

the other hand, who expect to find soup and crackers when they arrive beyond the Pearly Gate, must adjust to much subtler fare in that finer atmosphere; they cannot expect to leave here after lunch and arrive there in time for a hearty dinner!

Understanding the "heaven" and "hell" experienced in the after-death state

Most persons can look forward to a glorified experience of peace, freedom, and blessed relief from life's burdens and afflictions when the spirit leaves the body at the time of death.* However, those such as the rich man in this parable who are strongly attached to their physical forms are aghast at being wrenched away from their bodily instrument with its much-indulged materialistic capacities. As the life energy empowering all the senses and organs moves toward the medulla and then out of the physical form, desires urge the ego-bound soul to try to draw the consciousness back into the body. Such persons try again and again unsuccessfully to operate the lungs and other organs or to move the muscles with their disembodied will, but at last surrender their fruitless effort and enter a sort of dreamless sleep, a period of rest from the travails of life.

After the initial astral sleep, souls who left the body with powerful bad habits and dissipation of the senses of the physical form partially awaken in intermittent dreamlike astral experiences of unrequited craving to indulge the sense-desires of the lost physical vehicle. This frustration of unfulfilment and unslaked mortal thirsts causes a mental agony that is the real hell experienced in the afterlife.† When the karmically ordained period of astral suffering or reward is over, the soul wakes up in another body in a new incarnation on earth, endowed with the physical instrumentalities to pursue once again its desires and learning experiences—this time, it is to be hoped, with at least a little more wisdom learned from previous painful lessons.

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* See also Discourses 10 and 24 for further explanation of the positive after-death experiences in the astral world earned by most souls, in contradistinction to the unpleasant karmic lessons awaiting debased individuals, as Jesus cites in the parable explicated here.

† See also Discourse 48, commentary on Matthew 18:8–9: "If thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off, and cast them from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire."

The physical body and world are perceived through the two physical eyes; the heavenly astral body and cosmos are purely seen through the intuitional power of the one spiritual eye. "If therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light."* It is by opening the "single" or spiritual eye that one can perceive the luminous pranic forces that compose the astral body and astral cosmos.

Extremely materialistic persons, those who have led a terrible life, are unable after death to awaken fully into the consciousness of the wondrous potentials of their astral body. Their beclouded consciousness remains aware only of a region of darkness and mental distress.

Even while incarnate on earth, advanced souls who meditate deeply experience through their spiritual eye the all-knowing intuition of the soul as an illuminating lightless light that dispels the darkness of closed eyes; with that single power they can see, hear, smell, taste, and touch in the inner astral world. Thus when they die, intuition comes to their aid as a revealing light by which they can perceive the shining beauty of the astral world and their astral body. Only those who have developed soul intuition and have cultivated before death the body transcendence of God-consciousness can attain conscious ascendence into, and full awareness of, the highest regions of the heavenly astral world; and they can also, if they so desire, see across the vibrational gulf that divides heaven from earthly life.

Everything one has done to develop the "sixth sense" of intuition while on earth helps one after death. Since it is the degree of realization and the amount of virtue one has expressed on earth that determines one's experience in the astral region, there is much work to be done to purify the indwelling consciousness by God-contact and by persistence in exercising the godly virtues.

In depicting the astral ascension of the afflicted beggar Lazarus, Jesus gives comfort to suffering virtuous persons by the assurance that they should not feel discouraged, nor should they envy those with material advantages. Earthly blessings, if improperly used, may be followed by experiences of extreme discomfort in the after-death state. Righteous persons who retain their goodness until the end of their lives, no matter what suffering or deprivation they endure, will find when they leave the body that they have earned a heavenly freedom and joy in the astral kingdom. God does not wish suffering on His

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* Matthew 6:22 (see Discourse 28).

children, and certainly has not made it a prerequisite for attaining His kingdom; nevertheless, no pain that one suffers consciously goes without reward, the purifying effect of having burned off a measure of past karma or of having kindled an inner illumination that awakened and consolidated a nascent soul virtue. Every sacrifice performed on the altar of the body is recognised by God.* Those who suffer in the course of service to God and His children, and willingly sacrifice all for Him as Jesus did, will surely attain God-bliss.

Jesus explains in the parable, through Abraham's comments to the rich man, why Lazarus could not be sent to solace him in his astral sufferings. Abraham makes reference to the "gulf" of dividing vibration separating the astral vibratory spheres one from the other. As the material universe is divided into the principal vibratory regions of earth, water, air, and fiery energy, so there are several distinct regions of the subtler cosmos, each of which has many subdivisions, with the exception of the highest plane —there all is one. Ether-filled space acts as a vibratory rampart that prevents materialistic persons on earth from entering the heavenly astral kingdom; likewise, increasingly subtle vibratory forms of etheric space divide the lower from the higher astral regions, and the even finer causal realm from the astral.† Thus, the astral realm to which the rich man was consigned was separated by a vibrational barrier from the finer heavenly abode to which Lazarus's spiritual karma had drawn him, "so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence."

Can souls on earth or in the lower-astral hades receive help from heavenly beings?

The more advanced a soul is, the freer its movement within the vast territory of God's kingdom. Fully liberated souls have no boundaries of movement. But karma-restricted souls cannot move freely from one sphere into another sphere. People who are dark with delusive ignorance, crimes, or other wrong acts and have thus attracted temporary residence in the "slums" of the astral land after death would not even be able to stand the finer vibrations of a higher sphere and its residents of spiritual souls, just as in this world evil ones can-

* "Without real sacrifice, O Arjuna, whence comes any better world (any better existence or elevated state of consciousness)?" (*God Talks With Arjuna: The Bhagavad Gita* IV:31).

† See Chapter 43 of *Autobiography of a Yogi*, "The Resurrection of Sri Yukteswar," for my Guru's incomparable explanation of the astral and causal realms.

not bear to be in spiritual environs or in the company of saintly persons. On earth people cannot touch a high-voltage electric current without being burned; similarly, in the astral realm souls whose consciousness is of low vibrational quality experience energy shocks when they come in contact with higher vibrations. As man suffers in this world from collision with matter, so the astral body suffers in that world from collision with vibrations higher than its own.

Nevertheless, God in His mercy does not leave suffering souls in any region of creation bereft of help. In the astral world there are advanced good souls who help repentant bad ones to work out their karmic penances—as also do the prayers and goodwill that reach them from their loved ones on earth. Only those who have sufficiently developed their spiritual consciousness and the enlightenment of intuition during their earthly incarnations are consciously able to devote themselves to the good works of helping others in the astral world, and are also able to give invisible assistance to souls on earth.

In the afterlife, as on earth, souls must either ascend or descend; none can remain stationary until the permanence of God-union is attained. Those who have gone into the astral world at physical death with material desires must return to the gratifying playground of the physical world. Souls who have freed themselves from earthly karma, and who continue to develop in God-consciousness in the astral world, ascend into the supernally blissful causal heaven.

Most average persons, those whose sins are venial and few, are reborn on earth relatively sooner than more advanced souls; after their soul-renewing sojourn in the astral, they wake up in a new physical body with fresh opportunities to progress. Sinful persons are often confined longer by the force of their karma to whatever astral sphere is most conducive to learning the lessons that will prepare them for ultimate redemption. Virtuous souls may stay longer in the astral than do ordinary souls, reaping the blessed rewards of their good karma.

Although the rich man in the parable was caught in the self-created hades of his dissolute ways and unfulfilled desires and failed to gain alleviation of his miseries, he was generous enough in spirit to ask Abraham to send Lazarus to warn his wayward brothers and thereby save them from a similar fate. Even though divine law did not permit Abraham to comply with that wish, the implicit lesson in the story is that the rich man's repentance and marked unselfishness in thinking of his brothers' freedom, even while in the throes of his own torment, would

aid in working out the effects of his own profligate actions and help to liberate him from his lower-astral suffering. As in the physical world man can either act wrongly and move toward the dungeon of ignorance and misery or act rightly and thus move toward freedom, so souls in the astral world can either intensify their evil by rebellious thoughts or expiate their evil karma by repentance, prayer, and conscious virtuous resolution.

Abraham's refusal to send Lazarus to earth to warn the five brothers of the rich man about the consequences of riotous living was in accord with divine decree that God does not impose spectacular intervention of His powers to coerce the free will of man. Nor does He send the dead as His spokesmen.* His way is to send divine prophets whose message, exalted lives, and spiritual service encourage His error-led children to realize the rewards of following liberating paths of righteousness. If man be so inured to ignorance that he cannot be moved by the wisdom, love, and holy bliss-vibrations of God's chosen emissaries, neither would lasting beneficial change be effected by the testimony of any lesser spirit appearing from the astral world. Man of his own free will must make a resolute choice to attune his life with the teachings and blessings of God-sent gurus, saints, and prophets.

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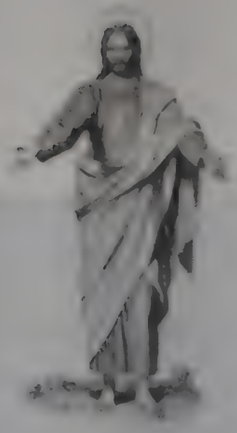
* "Many persons erroneously imagine that 'the dead'—human beings who have passed over to the astral world—are in touch with great masters or are themselves deep founts of wisdom. The truth is that most astral beings are not reliable messengers and have attained no final insight into the Great Mystery. The soul is divine; but until man achieves soul-realization he is unable after death to express any more divinity than he expressed during his life on earth. Only those persons who possessed enlightenment while in the physical body are empowered, upon leaving it, to unite with God and to impart illumination to others.

"The Gita points out that those who believe in consulting 'departed spirits' are ignorant men. Such persons rely on the guidance of astral entities instead of seeking communion with God, the Heavenly Father and Friend of all. Having His help, what need of aid from astral beings?" (*God Talks With Arjuna: The Bhagavad Gita,* commentary on XVII:4).



DISCOURSE 60

"I Am the Resurrection and the Life"

Jesus Raises Lazarus From the Dead

Advanced Souls Are Directed by "the Light of the World" in All That They Do

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The Physical, Astral, and Spiritual Meanings of Resurrection

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True Meaning of Jesus' Words, "I Am the Resurrection and the Life"

❖

One in Tune With Christ Consciousness Overcomes Physical and Spiritual Death

❖

Jesus Addressed God as a Warmly Personal and Supremely Kind Father

❖

Scientific Process by Which Jesus Restored Lazarus to Life

"Jesus performed this healing...to prove yet again that latent within every soul is potential power over every circumscribing mortal condition, and that there is no such thing as an unalterable fate."

***Now a certain man** was sick, named Lazarus, of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha. (It was that Mary which anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.) Therefore his sisters sent unto him, saying, "Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick."*

When Jesus heard that, he said, "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby."

Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus. When he had heard therefore that he was sick, he abode two days still in the same place where he was. Then after that saith he to his disciples, "Let us go into Judea again."

His disciples say unto him, "Master, the Jews of late sought to stone thee; and goest thou thither again?"

Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world. But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him."

These things said he: and after that he saith unto them, "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep."

Then said his disciples, "Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well." Howbeit Jesus spake of his death: but they thought that he had spoken of taking of rest in sleep.

Then said Jesus unto them plainly, "Lazarus is dead. And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe; nevertheless let us go unto him."

Then said Thomas, which is called Didymus, unto his fellowdisciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him."

Then when Jesus came, he found that he had lain in the grave four days already.

Now Bethany was nigh unto Jerusalem, about fifteen furlongs off: And many of the Jews came to Martha and Mary, to comfort them concerning their brother. Then Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met him: but

Mary sat still in the house. Then said Martha unto Jesus, "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. But I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee."

Jesus saith unto her, "Thy brother shall rise again."

Martha saith unto him, "I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day."

Jesus said unto her, "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?"

She saith unto him, "Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world."

And when she had so said, she went her way, and called Mary her sister secretly, saying, "The Master is come, and calleth for thee." As soon as she heard that, she arose quickly, and came unto him. Now Jesus was not yet come into the town, but was in that place where Martha met him.

The Jews then which were with her in the house, and comforted her, when they saw Mary, that she rose up hastily and went out, followed her, saying, "She goeth unto the grave to weep there." Then when Mary was come where Jesus was, and saw him, she fell down at his feet, saying unto him, "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled.

And said, "Where have ye laid him?"

They said unto him, "Lord, come and see." Jesus wept. Then said the Jews, "Behold how he loved him!"

And some of them said, "Could not this man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died?" Jesus therefore again groaning in himself cometh to the grave. It was a cave, and a stone lay upon it.

Jesus said, "Take ye away the stone."

Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto him, "Lord, by this time he stinketh: for he hath been dead four days."

Jesus saith unto her, "Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?"

Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid.

And Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, "Father, I thank Thee that Thou hast heard me. And I knew that Thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that Thou hast sent me."

And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth." And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, "Loose him, and let him go."

Then many of the Jews which came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on him. But some of them went their ways to the Pharisees, and told them what things Jesus had done.

Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, "What do we? for this man doeth many miracles. If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation."

And one of them, named Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year, said unto them, "Ye know nothing at all, nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not." And this spake he not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation; and not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad.

Then from that day forth they took counsel together for to put him to death. Jesus therefore walked no more openly among the Jews; but went thence unto a country near to the

wilderness, into a city called Ephraim, and there continued with his disciples.

And the Jews' Passover was nigh at hand: and many went out of the country up to Jerusalem before the Passover, to purify themselves. Then sought they for Jesus, and spake among themselves, as they stood in the temple, "What think ye, that he will not come to the feast?" Now both the chief priests and the Pharisees had given a commandment, that, if any man knew where he were, he should shew it, that they might take him.

—John 11:1–57

DISCOURSE 60

"I Am the Resurrection and the Life"

Jesus Raises Lazarus From the Dead

Now a certain man was sick, named Lazarus, of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha. (It was that Mary which anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.) Therefore his sisters sent unto him, saying, "Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick."*

When Jesus heard that, he said, "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby" (John 11:1–4).

"This sickness of Lazarus, though it may bring death, shall not end in death. Lazarus shall live, that the power of God as manifested in the Son of God might be gloriously revealed to bring the hope of immortal life to death-hounded man."

Jesus was not implying that Lazarus' death was prearranged merely to provide an occasion "for the glory of God" to be demonstrated.† Rather, Jesus had seen through his prophetic eye of omni-

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* John 12:3 (see Discourse 64).

† See also Discourse 52, commentary on John 9:3, regarding the man born blind: "Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him."

scient intuition that his disciple's karma had destined him to be the victim of a fatal illness, which would afford an opportunity, sanctioned by the Heavenly Father, for the manifestation of the divine power of resurrection through the Son, the Christ Consciousness incarnate in Jesus.

Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus. When he had heard therefore that he was sick, he abode two days still in the same place where he was. Then after that saith he to his disciples, "Let us go into Judea again."

*His disciples say unto him, "Master, the Jews of late sought to stone thee; and goest thou thither again?"**

Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world. But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him" (John 11:5–10).

When the disciples expressed concern about Jesus' decision to return to Judea, where his life might be endangered, he assured them that his steps were divinely guided: "As the daylight enables one to walk a difficult path without stumbling, so he who sees by inner perception the great light that governs the cosmos (the omnipresent intelligence of Christ Consciousness, and the Cosmic Vibration that informs and illumines the universe) walks in wisdom and avoids errors in choosing his course of action. But a person wandering in the night of delusive ignorance blunders and stumbles through life, having within him no guiding light of God-wisdom."

Advanced souls are directed by "the light of the world" in all that they do

Advanced devotees are directed in all that they do by "the light of the world"—Christ-imbued Cosmic Energy, which they perceive as an inner light of intuitive understanding or as the guidance of wisdom they hear vibrated by the Cosmic Sound of *Aum*.

* As recounted in John 10:33–42 (Discourse 52).

These things said he: and after that he saith unto them, "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep."

Then said his disciples, "Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well." Howbeit Jesus spake of his death: but they thought that he had spoken of taking of rest in sleep (John 11:11–13).

Jesus, miles away across the Jordan, knew when Lazarus died in Bethany. He had not received this information through any conventional means, as is clear from his companions' bewilderment. His certainty came through the universal Christ Consciousness manifesting in him, by which he felt himself present not only in his own body but in the body of his distant friend.

Jesus' knowledge came from Christ Consciousness, not psychic powers or telepathy

Persons with some measure of spiritual awakening can discern the thoughts and experiences of others at a distance through mental telepathy. Jesus' knowledge, however, came not through psychic powers but through his omnipresent Christ-feeling—a far greater state of consciousness. His expanded awareness, spread over the vast universal circumference, could feel every event on the earth's surface or within it, or anywhere in the material universe, or in any of the finer spheres of vibratory creation.

A person jostled by others in a crowd can feel exactly when and where on his body each touch falls, even if he does not see each contact. The Heavenly Father, through His ubiquitous Christ Consciousness, is aware of everything occurring in His immense body of the cosmos. Lord Jesus, Bhagavan Krishna, all souls imbued with Christ Consciousness, *Kutastha Chaitanya,* likewise possess that universal feeling of all-pervading Infinite Intelligence, by which they can be instantaneously aware of distant happenings, even as Jesus was cognizant of the death of Lazarus.

When Jesus said to his disciples, "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth," he signified: "Lazarus is sleeping the delusive sleep of death. I am going to him so that the Christ Consciousness in me can rouse him from the delusion of his death dream."

Sleep is a temporary death, in that it bestows partial freedom from mortal body consciousness; and death is but a prolonged "sleep," the astral rest between physical incarnations.* Both ordinary slumber and

* See Discourse 13 and Discourse 52, discussion of sleep and death in relation to man's states of consciousness.

the sleep of death are a part of cosmic dream delusion superimposed on the consciousness of the soul. As in a nocturnal dream a person can walk or sleep or die, so human beings under the influence of the cosmic dream behold their dream images as vitally alive, or sleeping the sleep of death, or waking in the after-death state. Christ knew the universe as a cosmic dream, so he said: "I see the soul of Lazarus is dreaming the sleep of death. I will make his soul dream life instead of death."

Then said Jesus unto them plainly, "Lazarus is dead. And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe; nevertheless let us go unto him."

Then said Thomas, which is called Didymus, unto his fellowdisciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him."

Then when Jesus came, he found that he had lain in the grave four days already.

Now Bethany was nigh unto Jerusalem, about fifteen furlongs off: And many of the Jews came to Martha and Mary, to comfort them concerning their brother. Then Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met him: but Mary sat still in the house. Then said Martha unto Jesus, "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. But I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee."

Jesus saith unto her, "Thy brother shall rise again."

Martha saith unto him, "I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day" (John 11:14–24).

66 The soul of Lazarus has left his physical body; and it is beneficial for the strengthening of your faith that I was not there to prevent his death, for then you would not be able to witness the ultimate miracle of resurrection. The intent is that by the raising up of Lazarus through the will of God you will then understand the Heavenly Father's glory and power."

The physical, astral, and spiritual meanings of resurrection

With Jesus' resolve to go to Bethany, about two miles from Jerusalem, the disciples knew he was returning to a hostile area and resolved, "Let us go also, that we may die with him."

Martha, distraught over the death of her brother, met Jesus partway with recrimination that had he come sooner he could have healed Lazarus, but also with faith that even now Jesus could command of the will of God the uttermost concession of unloosening the bonds of death.

"Resurrection at the last day" is not a fixed day in time when all souls will reappear in their dead bodies at the sound of Gabriel's trumpet. It is that particular time when any soul after death is judged by the cosmic law of action (karma) and accordingly is resurrected to live in one of the astral regions or on earth in a new incarnation.* Resurrection in that context signifies the rising of souls from the after-death state of sleep or rest to the wakefulness in higher or lower astral spheres, or to the transition of a soul from one body to another on earth, as Elijah was reborn as John the Baptist.

Resurrection can also mean the revival of life in a dead body, as illustrated in the case of Lazarus.

In addition, resurrection indicates the elevation of consciousness from lower to higher states—especially from body identification to superconsciousness, Christ Consciousness, or Cosmic Consciousness through communion, respectively, with the Holy Ghost *Aum* Vibration, the Infinite Christ, or Spirit.

Jesus said unto her, "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?"

She saith unto him, "Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world" (John 11:25–27).

"My soul, not being identified with bodily life, is not limited by the 'I am' of ego consciousness. Rather, the 'I am' of my consciousness, my individualized spirit, is one with the Christ Consciousness and the Cosmic Life in it; with this omnipresent conscious-

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* See also commentary on John 5:28–29, Discourse 21: "For the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation."

ness, I witness souls resurrected in various ways from the after-death state of sleep to the wakefulness in higher or lower spheres of being, or in a new life on the earth plane, or into transcendent states of consciousness.

True meaning of Jesus' words, "I am the resurrection and the life"

"That devotee who by meditation communes with the Christ Consciousness and Cosmic Life will also believe in their manifestation in me. Even if he be physically or spiritually dead, he may resurrect his life and consciousness through Christ Consciousness to resuscitate his dead body or to lift his soul from the sleep of death to God's heavenly kingdom, or spiritually to resurrect his consciousness from the conditions of delusion to the realization of Cosmic Consciousness. Any advanced soul who learns to feel permanently the eternal life, as is incarnate in me, and who believes in, communes with, the Christ Consciousness that is in me, and in himself, shall transcend mortal death: he shall never again be forced to reincarnate and experience the consequent ignoble change of death that befalls the physical body. Dost thou believe all this I say?"

Whenever Jesus speaks of "I am," it is from the consciousness of his soul being one with Christ Consciousness.* In contradistinction, when the ordinary person says, "I am," he refers to his body, his ego consciousness and its physical possessions or intellectual acquisitions; as for example, "I am strong," or, "I am rich," or, "I am a specialist in literature or philosophy." Whenever he says, "I am sick," or, "I am full of vitality," he speaks of his life as limited by the condition of his body.

When Jesus says, "*I am* the resurrection," he means, "I am Christ Consciousness in which souls rise from a lower state of consciousness to a higher state of inner development." When Jesus says, "*I am* the life," there is no taint of egotism in his voiced realization of "My life is one with the Cosmic Life in everything, whereby I feel all living creatures are born out of me and sleep in me."†

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* See commentary on similar usage of "I am" in John 6:35, "*I am* the bread of life" (Discourse 43); and in John 8:12, "*I am* the light of the world" (Discourse 51). Jesus speaks impersonally from his divine ego, or spiritualized human consciousness, that was one with the infinite Christ Consciousness and its permeative presence throughout all vibratory manifestation.

† Bhagavan Krishna, speaking from the same universal consciousness, similarly declared: "Understand, O Arjuna! that My different and higher nature (Para-Prakriti) is the *jiva*, the self-consciousness and life-principle, that sustains the cosmos" (*God Talks With Arjuna: The Bhagavad Gita* VII:5).

"He that believeth in me" refers not to those who merely believe in the physical existence and works of Jesus, but to those advanced devotees who have begun to realize the expansion of their consciousness to the Christ Consciousness in everything.

One in tune with Christ Consciousness overcomes physical and spiritual death

"Though he were dead" relates to both physical death and spiritual death. "Yet shall he live" refers to the resurrection of life in the physical body or the resurrection of a soul from a lower sphere to a higher sphere of consciousness.

One who is in tune with Christ Consciousness can re-enliven and reappear in his formerly dead body if he wishes. But repairing and reanimating the same deceased clod of earth is an unnecessary trouble and conservancy of the limitless creative substances of life. Unless they have a specific exceptional purpose, resurrected masters rather re-create a body in the likeness of their discarded physical form, equally true to the material specifications of their former image, as was the living manifestation of my master Sri Yukteswarji in his after-death appearance to me.*

One who is temporarily spiritually dead in the dream of delusion can regain by divine endeavour his soul's unity with Christ Consciousness.

"Whosoever liveth and believeth in me" refers to anyone who permanently communes with Christ Consciousness within him and hence believes or is convinced of the immortal Christ Consciousness equally present in himself as in Jesus.

"Shall never die" refers both to spiritual and physical death. All souls who can permanently commune with Christ Consciousness will never witness spiritual death through ignorance, or physical death through forced reincarnations. Souls who are identified with their bodies create human desires that bring them back to earth many times until those desires are worked out. Liberated souls, those who overcome material desires, become pillars in the mansion of God and "go no more out"; they are unloosed from the exigent cycles of alternate births and deaths. Nor will souls who are one with Christ Consciousness, though they live and move among the deluded masses, ever experience the death of wisdom through ignorance.†

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* See *Autobiography of a Yogi,* Chapter 43, "The Resurrection of Sri Yukteswar."

† Cf. Discourse 51, commentary on John 8:51: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, if a man keep my saying (remain continuously in Christ Consciousness), he shall never see death."

Martha, being an advanced disciple in attunement with Jesus, understood what he meant when he said, "I am the resurrection, and the life"; and thus, unlike the ordinary blind believer, she spoke with realization and justification: "Yes, Lord, I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God manifest in this body named Jesus."

And when she had so said, she went her way, and called Mary her sister secretly, saying, "The Master is come, and calleth for thee." As soon as she heard that, she arose quickly, and came unto him. Now Jesus was not yet come into the town, but was in that place where Martha met him.

The Jews then which were with her in the house, and comforted her, when they saw Mary, that she rose up hastily and went out, followed her, saying, "She goeth unto the grave to weep there." Then when Mary was come where Jesus was, and saw him, she fell down at his feet, saying unto him, "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled.

And said, "Where have ye laid him?"

They said unto him, "Lord, come and see." Jesus wept. Then said the Jews, "Behold how he loved him!"

And some of them said, "Could not this man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died?" Jesus therefore again groaning in himself cometh to the grave. It was a cave, and a stone lay upon it (John 11:28–38).

When Jesus, human and divine as he was, saw Mary and her companions weeping, the universal sympathy within his great spirit felt the vibrations of their sorrow. Jesus wept not because he was emotionally overcome with his own sadness, but because his tender, divinely sensitive heart felt the overwhelming grief of his beloved disciples, Mary and Martha, and of their friends.

Sympathy is a natural outreach of God's love in one who has begun to experience Christ Consciousness. Genuine feeling for others is a throb of the heart of that great consciousness, a feeling that should be cultivated continuously until it wells up within as Christlike

compassion desiring to bring solace and comfort to those who are in pain or suffering.

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Jesus said, "Take ye away the stone."

Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto him, "Lord, by this time he stinketh: for he hath been dead four days."

Jesus saith unto her, "Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?" (John 11:39–40).

"Did I not tell you and make you feel the vibrations of my divine will that if you are convinced of the omnipotent Christ Consciousness in me you will be able to behold the power and glory of Cosmic Consciousness, to be manifested shortly?"

Jesus' reference to "the glory of God" signifies not that God seeks the recognition of man by a display of His glory, but that He grants to devotees advanced in faith and merit a privileged demonstration in which they may behold His glory, the active manifestation of His power on earth.

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Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid.

And Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, "Father, I thank Thee that Thou hast heard me. And I knew that Thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that Thou hast sent me" (John 11:41–42).

"O ever-conscious, ever-wise, ever-responding Father, infinite Cosmic Consciousness, I thank Thee that Thou hast vibrated Thine absolute power in the Christ Consciousness in me. With no reservation of doubt, I know with certainty and intuition that Thou dost always vibrate Thine omnipotence of Cosmic Consciousness in response to the vibrating divine wishes in my Christ Intelligence. But for the benefit of the people around me, I declared that Thou hast

heard me, that they may know my Christ Consciousness is the reflection of Thy Cosmic Consciousness, which has become manifest in my body called Jesus through Thy sovereign wish."

Jesus addressed God as a warmly personal and supremely kind Father

When Jesus said, "Father, I thank Thee that Thou hast heard me," he teaches all mankind that God is not only an impersonal Spirit, but also a warmly personal Father who responds to the devotion of those who love Him. The human father's kindness to the child is but a limited reflection of the Heavenly Father's infinite kindness. How much more caring, then, is the Heavenly Father to all His human children! When Jesus says, "I knew that Thou hearest me always," he signifies that the Christ Intelligence, which he felt within himself, intelligently directs the work of all creation through power received from Cosmic Consciousness. "Always" indicates that throughout eternity the Christ Consciousness is working the will of Cosmic Consciousness in the universe.

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And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth." And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, "Loose him, and let him go" (John 11:43–44).

"O ye disembodied soul of Lazarus, reappear in the body made whole by the Cosmic Energy of God!"

Scientific process by which Jesus restored Lazarus to life

Reinforcing Jesus' peremptory command "Lazarus, come forth!" was his mastery of hidden divine laws applied to accomplish this ultimate feat of healing. In doing so, he demonstrated that death is not the dread finality feared by worldly persons—and that even seemingly irreversible decrees of karma are subject to mitigation by God and by saints who are one with Him. Jesus allowed Lazarus' karma to take its destined course; even after learning that his disciple had been severely stricken with illness, "he abode two days still in the same place where he was," until after Lazarus had died. The decree of the karmic law having thus been carried out, Jesus arrived to perform his miracle of resurrection.

By the time Jesus reached Bethany, the body of Lazarus had begun to decay, "for he hath been dead four days." Several steps were therefore necessary. First Jesus made contact with Lazarus in the astral world, so that he could call him back again. Then, projecting his own divinely invulnerable consciousness into the dead body of Lazarus, he absorbed and neutralized, by taking onto himself, the force of the specific karma that had compelled Lazarus' soul to leave that form. Once that karmic imprint of death on the bodily cells was no longer operative, Jesus was able by command of his God-united will to direct Cosmic Energy to restore the viability of the cells, so that they were capable once again of accommodating a living soul with its astral and causal faculties of life and consciousness. Finally, he invited the soul of Lazarus to reinhabit its renewed fleshly residence; in effect, resurrecting it from the state of inert matter by reinvesting it with the powers of knowledge and action, mind and energy, that had fled with the departure of the astral and causal bodies. "And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, 'Loose him, and let him go.'"

Jesus performed this healing not only because of his compassion for his beloved disciples Mary and Martha, but to prove yet again that latent within every soul is potential power over every circumscribing mortal condition, and that there is no such thing as an unalterable fate.

Then many of the Jews which came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on him. But some of them went their ways to the Pharisees, and told them what things Jesus had done.

Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, "What do we? for this man doeth many miracles. If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation."

And one of them, named Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year, said unto them, "Ye know nothing at all, nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not." And this spake he not

of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation; and not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad.

Then from that day forth they took counsel together for to put him to death. Jesus therefore walked no more openly among the Jews; but went thence unto a country near to the wilderness, into a city called Ephraim, and there continued with his disciples.

And the Jews' Passover was nigh at hand: and many went out of the country up to Jerusalem before the Passover, to purify themselves. Then sought they for Jesus, and spake among themselves, as they stood in the temple, "What think ye, that he will not come to the feast?" Now both the chief priests and the Pharisees had given a commandment, that, if any man knew where he were, he should shew it, that they might take him (John 11:45–57).

DISCOURSE 61

"The Kingdom of God Is Within You"

Jesus' Teachings About God's Kingdom:
The Core of His Message to the World

❖

Cosmic Consciousness Lies Within and Behind the Layers
of Matter, Energy, and Thought

❖

Heaven Is Found by Turning Within
to the Cerebrospinal Centres of Spiritual Consciousness

❖

Raja Yoga:
Royal Science of Realizing the Kingdom of God Within Oneself

❖

Through Meditation, One Gains Access
to the Interior Infinitude of God's Kingdom

❖

God's Kingdom of Supreme Happiness Is the Birthright of Every Soul

"When man is settled in that inner kingdom of divine consciousness, the awakened intuitive perception of the soul pierces the veils of matter, life energy, and consciousness and uncovers the God-essence in the heart of all things."

***"But which of you,** having a servant plowing or feeding cattle, will say unto him by and by, when he is come from the field, 'Go and sit down to meat'? And will not rather say unto him, 'Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself, and serve me, till I have eaten and drunken; and afterward thou shalt eat and drink'? Doth he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I trow not.*

"So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, 'We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.'"

And it came to pass, as he went to Jerusalem, that he passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee. And as he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off: And they lifted up their voices, and said, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us."

And when he saw them, he said unto them, "Go shew yourselves unto the priests." And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed. And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God, and fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan.

And Jesus answering said, "Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine? There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger."

And he said unto him, "Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole."

And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: Neither shall they say, 'Lo here!' or, 'lo there!' for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you."

—Luke 17:7–21*

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* The remainder of Luke chapter 17 (verses 22–37) is paralleled in Matthew chapter 24 and is commented on in that context in Discourse 67.

And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint; saying, "There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man: And there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, 'Avenge me of mine adversary.' And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, 'Though I fear not God, nor regard man; yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.'"

And the Lord said, "Hear what the unjust judge saith. And shall not God avenge His own elect, which cry day and night unto Him, though He bear long with them? I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?"

And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: "Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican.

"The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank Thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.'

"And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, 'God be merciful to me a sinner.'

I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

—Luke 18:1–14

DISCOURSE 61

"The Kingdom of God Is Within You"

"But which of you, having a servant plowing or feeding cattle, will say unto him by and by, when he is come from the field, 'Go and sit down to meat'? And will not rather say unto him, 'Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself, and serve me, till I have eaten and drunken; and afterward thou shalt eat and drink'? Doth he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I trow not.

"So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, 'We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do'" (Luke 17:7–10).

Jesus speaks of the principle that no devotee should feel elated or self-righteous, or expect gratitude and honour from the Heavenly Father, just because he follows the divine path and obeys its commandments. Such behaviour is for his own good and leads to his own emancipation; it is no favour rendered to God, but rather man's bounden and privileged duty as one who lives under the cosmic regime of the Divine Ruler.

And it came to pass, as he went to Jerusalem, that he passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee. And as he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, which

stood afar off: And they lifted up their voices and said, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us."

And when he saw them, he said unto them, "Go shew yourselves unto the priests." And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed. And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God, and fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan.

And Jesus answering said, "Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine? There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger."

And he said unto him, "Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole" (Luke 17:11–19).

Jesus is pointing out the material nature of most people, who, even when they are the beneficiaries of providential gifts, rejoice in their good fortune but remain thoughtlessly lacking in recognition of the Giver. Just imagine! out of the ten lepers who were blessed with instantaneous healing of their insidious disease by the divine power in Jesus, only one was moved to express due gratitude.

The purist Jews in the time of Jesus esteemed themselves and their religious traditions as spiritually superior to their contemporaries. So Jesus made an issue of the fact that it was a "stranger" to those traditions, a "low-caste" Samaritan of mixed race and customs,* who had the spiritual sensitivity to thank Jesus and glorify God.

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And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: Neither shall they say, 'Lo here!' or, 'lo there!' for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you" (Luke 17:20–21).

Jesus addresses man as the perennial seeker of permanent happiness and freedom from all suffering: "The kingdom of God—of eternal, immutable, ever-newly blissful Cosmic Consciousness—is within you. Behold your soul as a reflection of the immortal Spirit, and you

* See also Discourse 17, commentary on John 4:5–10.

will find your Self encompassing the infinite empire of God-love, God-wisdom, God-bliss existing in every particle of vibratory creation and in the vibrationless Transcendental Absolute."

Jesus' teachings about God's kingdom: the core of his message to the world

The teachings of Jesus about God's kingdom—sometimes in direct language, sometimes in parables pregnant with metaphysical meaning—may be said to be the core of the entirety of his message. The Gospel records that at the very outset of his public ministry, "Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God." His exhortation to "seek ye first the kingdom of God" is at the heart of his Sermon on the Mount. The only prayer he is known to have given his disciples beseeches God, "Thy kingdom come." Again and again he spoke of the kingdom of the Heavenly Father and the method of its attainment:

"Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."*

"Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able."†

"No man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up."‡

"And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire."§

"I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture."**

"I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."††

Taken together, these and Jesus' other declarations about the kingdom of God provide for a comprehensive understanding of the simple statement in the present verses that God's kingdom is to be found not by "observation"—use of the matter-tuned senses of sight, hearing, taste, smell, and touch—but by interiorization of the consciousness to perceive the Divine Reality "within you."

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* John 3:5 (see Discourse 13).

† Luke 13:24 (see Discourse 57).

‡ John 3:13–14 (see Discourse 14).

§ Mark 9:47 (see Discourse 48).

** John 10:9 (see Discourse 52).

†† John 14:6 (see Discourse 70).

"The kingdom of God does not come in response to sensory observation; neither can they find it who say, 'Behold, it is here or there somewhere in the clouds.' Rather, concentrate within and you will find the sphere of God-consciousness hidden behind your material consciousness."

Many people think of heaven as a physical location, a point of space far above the atmosphere and beyond the stars. Others interpret Jesus' statements about the advent of the kingdom of God as referring to the coming of a Messiah to establish and rule over a divine kingdom on earth. In fact, the kingdom of God and the kingdom of heaven consist, respectively, of the transcendental infinitudes of Cosmic Consciousness and the heavenly causal and astral realms of vibratory creation that are considerably finer and more harmonized with God's will than those physical vibrations clustered together as planets, air, and earthly surroundings.*

Cosmic Consciousness lies within and behind the layers of matter, energy, and thought

Material objects cognized as sensations of sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch are constituted of a play of forces originating and existing beyond the observational capabilities of human consciousness. The incipient origin of all material forms and material vibrations lies in Cosmic Consciousness. Matter is condensed physical energy; physical energy is condensed astral energy; and astral energy is condensed prototypic thought force of God. Hence Cosmic Consciousness lies hidden within and behind the layers of matter, physical energy, astral energy, and thought or consciousness.

As in the macrocosm, so in the microcosm of the human body: Cosmic Consciousness, which is marked by ever new joy and immortality, is the creator of human consciousness and as such lies within it. From the infinite Cosmic Consciousness, individual souls were conceived; these individualized ideations of the thought of God were cloaked in two further layers of external manifestation by condensation of magnetic causal forces of consciousness into the astral body of luminous life energy and the mortal body of flesh and blood.

Thus the kingdom of God is not separate from the kingdom of matter, but is both within it—pervading it in subtle form as its origin

* See Discourse 37 for explanation of the meanings of "kingdom of God" and "kingdom of heaven" as used both distinctively and interchangeably.

and sustainer—and beyond it, existing in the infinite mansions of the Father beyond the circumscribed physical cosmos.*

That is why Jesus said it is futile to look for heaven with the consciousness concentrated on material vibrations—identified with bodily sensations and pleasures and earthly comforts.† In the kingdom of matter and body consciousness man finds disease and mental and physical suffering; but turning within to the inner kingdom he finds the Comforter, the Holy Ghost or Cosmic Vibration of *Aum,* manifesting in the subtle cerebrospinal centres of spiritual consciousness. To be carried along the outgoing stream of material consciousness is to be swept willy-nilly into the hades of Satan's kingdom—the realm of earthly attachments and limitations of the mortal body; to follow the inwardly flowing stream of consciousness by meditating on *Aum* is to reach the blissful kingdom of God that exists behind the opaque obstruction of the physical being.

Heaven is found by turning within to the cerebrospinal centres of spiritual consciousness

Communion with the holy Comforter brings attunement with Christ Consciousness indwelling in the body as the ever perfect soul.

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* "If those who lead you say, 'Look! the kingdom is in heaven,' then the birds of heaven will precede you. If they say to you, 'It is in the sea,' then the fish will precede you. But the kingdom is within you and it is outside of you. If you will know yourselves, then you will be known, and you will realize that you are children of the living Father. But if you do not know yourselves, then you dwell in poverty and you are poverty" (The Gospel of Thomas, verse 3).

His disciples said to him, "...When will the new world come?" He said to them, "What you are looking forward to has come, but you don't know it" (The Gospel of Thomas, verse 51).

Jesus' disciples said unto him: "When will the kingdom come?" Jesus answered, "It will not come by waiting for it. People will not say, 'Look! Here it is!' or 'There it is!' But the kingdom of the Father is spread out upon the earth and people do not see it" (The Gospel of Thomas, verse 113). *(Publisher's Note)*

† Among the non-canonical Gospels that have survived from the earliest part of the Christian era is a fragmentary manuscript known as "The Dialogue of the Savior," composed around A.D. 150 and lost until the discovery of the Nag Hammadi manuscripts in 1945 (see page 69 n). The translation in *The Complete Gospels: Annotated Scholars Version* includes this passage (14:1–4):

Matthew said: "Lord, I wish to see that place of life...where there is no wickedness but only pure light."

The Lord said, "Brother Matthew, you will not be able to see it as long as you bear flesh."

Matthew said: "Lord, even if I will not be able to see it, let me know it."

The Lord said, "Those who have known themselves have seen it." *(Publisher's Note)*

Through deeper communion with the Christ Consciousness comes realization of the soul's oneness with omnipresent Spirit—the little Self expanding to its infinite Self to encompass the boundless divine kingdom of ever-existing, ever-conscious, ever-new Bliss.

For every body-circumscribed soul the kingdom of God awaits discovery by those who delve within in meditation to transcend human consciousness and reach the successively higher states of superconsciousness, Christ Consciousness, and Cosmic Consciousness. Those who meditate deeply, concentrating intensely within their state of silence, or neutralized thoughts, withdraw their minds from material objects of sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch—from all bodily sensations and disturbing mental restlessness. In this focused stillness within, they find an ineffable sense of peace. Peace is the first glimpse of the inner kingdom of God.

Devotees who at will can thus interiorize their minds and concentrate fully within the resultant peacefulness will definitely find entry into the kingdom of God-consciousness. That realization gradually unfolds itself as omnipresence, omniscience, ever new bliss, and visions of the realms of eternal light in which all liberated souls move in God, materialising or dematerialising themselves at will. No one can enter this heaven of Cosmic Consciousness unless through the gates of devout concentration and meditation he can penetrate his consciousness deeply within himself. That is why Jesus said unequivocally, "The kingdom of God is within you," that is, within the transcendent states of your soul perceptions.

There is a beautiful accord between the teachings of Jesus Christ to enter the "kingdom of God within you" and the teachings of yoga set forth by Lord Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita to restore King Soul, the reflection of God in man, to its rightful rulership of the bodily kingdom, with full realization of the soul's godly states of consciousness.* When man is settled in that inner kingdom of divine consciousness, the awakened intuitive perception of the soul pierces the veils of matter, life energy, and consciousness and uncovers the God-essence in the heart of all things.

Raja Yoga: royal science of realizing the kingdom of God within oneself

*See Chapter 1 of *God Talks With Arjuna: The Bhagavad Gita* for a detailed discussion of this spiritual analogy.

> He dwells in the world, enveloping all—everywhere, His hands and feet; present on all sides, His eyes and ears, His mouths and heads;
>
> Shining in all the sense faculties, yet transcending the senses; unattached to creation, yet the Mainstay of all; free from the *gunas* (modes of Nature), yet the Enjoyer of them.
>
> He is within and without all that exists, the animate and the inanimate; near He is, and far; imperceptible because of His subtlety.
>
> He, the Indivisible One, appears as countless beings; He maintains and destroys those forms, then creates them anew.
>
> The Light of All Lights, beyond darkness; Knowledge itself, That which is to be known, the Goal of all learning, He is seated in the hearts of all.*

Raja Yoga, the royal way of God-union, is the science of actual realization of the kingdom of God that lies within oneself. Through practice of the sacred yoga techniques of interiorization received during initiation from a true guru, one can find that kingdom by awakening the astral and causal centres of life force and consciousness in the spine and brain that are the gateways into the heavenly regions of transcendent consciousness. One who achieves such awakening knows the omnipresent God in His Infinite Nature, and in the purity of one's soul, and even in the delusive cloaks of changeable material forms and forces.

Patanjali, India's foremost ancient exponent of *Raja Yoga,* outlined eight steps to be followed for ascension into the kingdom of God within.

1. *Yama,* moral conduct: abstaining from injury to others, falsehood, stealing, incontinence, and covetousness.
2. *Niyama:* purity of body and mind, contentment in all circumstances, self-discipline, self-study (contemplation), and devotion to God.

These first two steps yield self-control and mental calmness.

3. *Asana:* disciplining the body so that it can assume and maintain the correct posture for meditation without fatigue or physical and mental restlessness.
4. *Pranayama:* techniques of life-force control that calm the heart and breath and remove sensory distractions from the mind.
5. *Pratyahara:* the power of complete mental interiorization and stillness resulting from withdrawal of the mind from the senses.

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* *God Talks With Arjuna: The Bhagavad Gita* XIII:13–17.

Jesus in the Interiorization of Prayer in Meditation

"The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: Neither shall they say, 'Lo here!' or, 'lo there!' for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you."

—Luke 17:20–21

The kingdom of God awaits discovery by those who delve within in meditation....Devotees who at will can thus interiorize their minds and concentrate fully within the resultant peacefulness will definitely find entry into the kingdom of God-consciousness. That realization gradually unfolds itself as omnipresence, omniscience, ever new bliss....

No one can enter this heaven of Cosmic Consciousness unless through the gates of devout concentration and meditation he can penetrate his consciousness deeply within himself. That is why Jesus said unequivocally, "The kingdom of God is within you," that is, within the transcendent states of your soul perceptions....

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—Paramahansa Yogananda

Painting by V. V. Sapar

6. *Dharana:* the power to use the interiorized mind to become one-pointedly concentrated upon God in one of His aspects through which He reveals Himself to the inward perception of the devotee.
7. *Dhyana:* meditation deepened by the intensity of concentration (*dharana*) that gives the conception of the vastness of God, His attributes as manifested in His endless expansion of Cosmic Consciousness.
8. *Samadhi,* union with God: the full realization of the soul's oneness with Spirit.

All devotees may find the door to the kingdom of God by concentrating on the spiritual eye, the Christ Consciousness centre at the point between the eyebrows. Long and deep meditation as taught by a true guru enables one gradually to convert the consciousness of the material body into that of the astral body, and with the awakened faculties of astral perception to intuit deeper and deeper states of consciousness until one reaches oneness with the Source of consciousness. Entering the door of the spiritual eye, one leaves behind all attachments to matter and the physical body and gains access into the interior infinitudes of God's kingdom.

Through meditation, one gains access to the interior infinitude of God's kingdom

The tissues of the physical body are made up of cells; the tissue of the astral body is composed of lifetrons—intelligent units of light or life energy. When man is in a state of body attachment, characterized by tension or contraction of life energy into atomic components, the lifetrons of the astral body become compacted, circumscribed by identification with the physical form. By metaphysical relaxation, the lifetronic structure begins to expand—the grip of the flesh on one's identity loosens. By deeper and deeper meditation, the energy frame of the astral self expands beyond the boundaries of the physical body. The lifetronic body, being of a sphere of existence unconfounded by the delusional stricture of the three-dimensional physical world, has the potential to become one with the Cosmic Energy pervading the whole universe. God as Holy Ghost, Holy Vibration, is the Light of Cosmic Energy; man, made in the image of God, is composed of that light. We are that Light compacted; and we are that Light of our Universal Self.

As a first step toward entering the kingdom of God, the devotee should sit still in the correct meditation posture, with erect spine, and tense and relax the body—for by relaxation the consciousness is released from the muscles. The yogi begins with proper deep breathing, inhaling and tensing the whole body, exhaling and relaxing, several times. With each exhalation all muscular tension and motion should be cast away, until a state of bodily stillness is attained. Then, by concentration techniques, restless motion is removed from the mind. In perfect stillness of body and mind, the yogi enjoys the ineffable peace of the presence of the soul. In the body, life is templed; in the mind, light is templed; in the soul, peace is templed. The deeper one goes into the soul the more that peace is felt; that is superconsciousness. When by deeper meditation the devotee expands that awareness of peace and feels his consciousness spreading with it over the universe, that all beings and all creation are swallowed up in that peace, then he is entering into Cosmic Consciousness. He feels that peace everywhere—in the flowers, in every human being, in the atmosphere. He beholds the earth and all worlds floating like bubbles in that ocean of peace.*

The inner peace first experienced by the devotee in meditation is his own soul; the vaster peace he feels by going deeper is God. The devotee who experiences unity with everything has established God in the temple of his infinite inner perception.

> In the temple of silence, in the temple of peace,
> I will meet Thee, I will touch Thee, I will love Thee,
> And coax Thee to my altar of peace.
>
> In the temple of *samadhi,* in the temple of bliss,
> I will meet Thee, I will touch Thee, I will love Thee,
> And coax Thee to my altar of bliss.†

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* "Firmly holding the spine, neck, and head erect and motionless, let the yogi focus his eyes at the starting place of the nose (the spot between the two eyebrows); let him not gaze around in various directions.

"With serenity and fearlessness, with steadfastness in *brahmacharya,* with the mind controlled, with the thoughts centred on Me, the yogi should sit, meditating on Me as the Final Goal.

"The self-governed yogi—he whose mind is fully under control—thus engaging his soul in ceaseless meditative union with Spirit, attains the peace of My being: the final *Nirvana* (deliverance)" (*God Talks With Arjuna: The Bhagavad Gita* VI:13–15).

† From *Words of Cosmic Chants: Spiritualized Songs for Divine Communion* by Paramahansa Yogananda (published by Yogoda Satsanga Society of India).

When restless thoughts have been banished, automatically the mind is made into a sacred temple of peace. God intimates Himself in the temple of silence and then in the temple of peace. The devotee first meets Him as peace flowing out of the mental state in which all thoughts have become transformed into pure intuitive feeling. He touches the Lord with his heart's love and feels Him as joy; his pure love entices God to manifest Himself on the altar of the perception of peace. The advancing devotee feels God not only in meditation, but keeps Him always on the altar of peace in his heart.

In the temple of *samadhi,* oneness with the peace that is God's first manifestation in meditation, the devotee finds a state of ever new bliss, a joy that never grows stale. Bliss is a much deeper state than peace. As a mute person drinking nectar imbibes but cannot describe the ambrosial flavour, so the rapture of bliss found in the temple of *samadhi* moves the experiencer to wordless eloquence. That joy alone can satisfy the innate craving of the human heart. In patient, persistent meditation, day after day, year after year, the devotee lovingly demands of his Lord: "Come to me as joy in *samadhi*-oneness, and remain forever in my heart on the altar of bliss!" When in our hearts, in harmony with the hearts of all who love God in the interior temple of silence and bliss, we rejoice in the joy of our one Beloved, that united joy is a vast altar of God.

It is incumbent on man as a soul to practise that inner silence; to find God now. In the use of the senses amid the exigencies of daily life, the devotee holds to the consciousness: "I am sitting on the peace throne of inner silence." In the midst of activity, he remains inwardly recollected: "I am the god of silence sitting on the throne of each action." His equanimity is upset by no unruly feelings: "I am the prince of silence sitting on the throne of poise." His inner Self, at one with eternity, in life and in death rejoices: "I am the king of immortality reigning on the throne of silence. Destruction of the body, delusion's insults to the soul, impositions of restlessness, trials of life—these are but dramas I am acting in and watching as divine entertainment. I may play for a little while; but always, from the inner refuge of my silence, I behold the unfolding script of life with the calm joy of immortality."

If through practice of meditation one keeps knocking on the doors of silence, God will respond: "Come in. I whispered to you through all guises of nature; and now I say to you, I am Joy—the living

Fountain of Joy. Bathe in My waters—wash away your habits, cleanse yourself of fears. I dreamed a beautiful dream for you; but, My child, you made of it a nightmare." God wants His children to be no longer prodigal sons, but to play their roles in life as immortals, that when they leave the stage of this earth they can say, "Father, that was a nice entertainment, but now I am ready to come Home."

God's kingdom of supreme happiness is the birthright of every soul

It is a sin against the divine nature of the Self to think that there is no chance of being happy, to abandon all hope of attaining peace—these must be exposed as psychological errors born of Satan's interference in the human mind. Infinite happiness and peace are always at hand, just behind the screen of man's ignorance.* How could it be possible for anyone to be forever barred from the kingdom of God, when that divine realm is right within him? All one has to do is turn from the darkness of evil and follow the light of goodness.

The proximity of happiness is as close as one's own Self; it isn't even a matter of attaining, but only of lifting the soul-shrouding veil of ignorance. The very word "attaining" implies something one wants but does not have—a metaphysical error. Bliss is the irrevocable divine birthright of every soul. Tear away the intrusive veil, and at once there is contact with that happiness supreme. Spirit is happiness. Soul is the pure reflection of Spirit. Body-bound man fails to perceive this because his consciousness is distorted: The lake of his mind is constantly roiled by the incursion of thoughts and emotions. Meditation quiets the waves of feeling (*chitta*) so that God's reflection as the joyous soul is clearly mirrored within.

Most beginners on the path to the inner kingdom of God find that their meditation is entrapped in restlessness. That is Satan's lair. The devotee must escape by perseverance in yoga practice and devotion. "Whenever the fickle and restless mind wanders away—for whatever reason—let the yogi withdraw it from those distractions and return it to the sole control of the Self....Undoubtedly the mind is fickle and unruly; but by yoga practice and by dispassion, O Arjuna, the mind may nevertheless be controlled. This is My word: Yoga is difficult of

* "The ignorant, oblivious of My transcendental nature as the Maker of all creatures, discount also My presence within the human form" (*God Talks With Arjuna: The Bhagavad Gita* IX:11).

attainment by the ungoverned man; but he who is self-controlled will, by striving through proper methods, be able to achieve it."*

The habit of being inwardly in the calm presence of God must be developed, so that day and night that consciousness will remain steadfast. It is worth the effort; for to live in the consciousness of God is to be done with enslavement to disease, suffering, and fear. Just be with God; that is the be-all and end-all of life. If one resolves never to go to sleep at night without meditating and feeling the Divine Presence, into one's life will come happiness beyond all expectation. Effort is necessary, but that effort will make one a king enthroned in the kingdom of peace and joy. Time spent in the pursuit of extraneous material things is a waste of man's precious opportunities to know God. I am telling you this from my heart: Blessed is he who makes up his mind never to rest until he has found God.

A subsistent inner happiness unconditioned by any external influence is evident proof of the responding presence of God. Progress in divine communion comes only by meditating with regularity and with deep concentration and devotion. Every day's meditation must be deeper than yesterday's. The devotee who makes the divine quest his overriding concern will find in the kingdom of God eternal safety; no tremor of trouble or trials can cross the threshold of his sanctuary of silence wherein naught is allowed ingress but the blissful, all-loving Father-Mother God.

One who finds within himself that "secret place of the most High" becomes suffused with supreme happiness and divine security.† Whether he is mixing with friends or sleeping or working, he keeps that place only for God. With his consciousness centred in the Lord, he finds *maya's* concentric veils suddenly lifting; in joy the devotee sees God playing hide-and-seek with him in the blossoms, and the stars

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* *God Talks With Arjuna: The Bhagavad Gita* VI:26, 35–36.

† "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in Him will I trust....

"There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling. For He shall give His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone....

"Because he hath set his love upon Me, therefore will I deliver him:

"I will set him on high, because he hath known My name. He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him: I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honour him. With long life will I satisfy him, and shew him My salvation" (Psalms 91:1–16).

shining with a stronger Light, and the sky smiling with the Infinite. When his eyes are spiritually opened, the devotee beholds, peering at him through the eyes of everyone, the eyes of the Infinite. Behind the kind or unkind voice of everyone he hears the truthful voice of the Infinite. Behind the wise or helter-skelter will of everyone he perceives the constancy of the will of God. Behind all human loves he feels the supreme love of God. What a wonderful existence, when all of God's disguises are cast off and the devotee is face to face with the Infinite, in blissful oneness of divine communion!

Be always intoxicated with the Divine, with the wave of your consciousness ever at rest on the bosom of the Eternal Sea. When one is kicking and splashing about in the water, there is little consciousness of the ocean itself, but of the struggle. But when one lets go and relaxes, the body floats; it feels in its buoyancy the whole sea lapping around it. That is the way the calm devotee feels God, with the whole universe of Divine Happiness rocking gently beneath his consciousness.

God's kingdom is within you; *He* is within you. Just behind your perceptions, just behind your thoughts, just behind your feelings, He is. Every grain of food you eat, every breath you take, is God. You are not living by food or oxygen, but by the Cosmic Word of God. All powers of mind and action that you use are borrowed from God. Think of Him all the time—before you act, while you are engaged in activity, and after activity. In fulfilling your duty to man, remember foremost your duty to God, without whose delegated power no duties are possible. Feel Him behind your senses of sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch. Feel His energy in the arms, and legs, and feet. Feel Him as life in each exhalation and inhalation. Feel His power in your will; His wisdom in your brain; His love in your heart. Wherever God's presence is consciously felt, mortal ignorance melts away.

Those who are wise never miss their daily engagement with God in meditation. They make it the consuming goal of their existence to contact Him. All who persist with that sincerity shall enter the kingdom of God in this life; and to abide in that kingdom is to be eternally free.

And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint; saying, "There was in a city a

judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man: And there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, 'Avenge me of mine adversary.' And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, 'Though I fear not God, nor regard man; yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.'"

And the Lord said, "Hear what the unjust judge saith. And shall not God avenge His own elect, which cry day and night unto Him, though He bear long with them? I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:1–8).

"Bear in mind, if an unjust judge will respond to unrelenting petitions, how much more so will God, the Just Judge of all judges, punish the satanic enemy of His select devotees whose prayers have night and day cried out for spiritual help, and which He has long patiently heard, bearing with those devotees their anguish. I say unto you, when the call of the continuous prayers of true devotees reach the zenith of sincere intensity, He speedily responds by destroying the inimical satanic ignorance that tortures their minds with misery and unhappiness. Likewise, the Christ Consciousness embodied in me has come in response to the soul cries of true devotees on earth who want to be rid of misery-making satanic delusion. Those who are found to have faith in divine power shall be delivered from the scourge of this adversary."

All devotees who seek with sincerity, intensity, and perseverance will receive God's response

Jesus tells all devotees not to be discouraged ("not to faint") in their efforts if it seems that God is not responding to their prayers. By way of illustration, he posits a case in which a hard-hearted, indifferent judge finally acquiesces to the relentless petitioning of a beleaguered widow; even so, he promises, God in His infinite kindheartedness will respond far more readily to sincere, unceasing prayers.

True devotees in continuous prayer seek deliverance from the torment of sly satanic delusion, desiring that enemy to be punished by banishment from the precincts of the mind so that their worship of God may be without taint of distraction.

Jesus notes that during his time on earth, he will find faith there —that is, he will find receptive devotees with developed soul intuition, or faith; these advanced devotees justify his incarnation.

As cited in the Bhagavad Gita, God from time to time manifests Himself by coming to earth in the body of an avatar, or saviour, to redeem souls and uplift world consciousness. It was the need of a troubled world, and also the faith or intuitive conviction of highly advanced devotees such as Peter and John, that acted as a magnet of continuous prayer to draw God's response by sending Jesus Christ on earth in that particular time and place.

Jesus repeatedly emphasizes the importance of faith in receiving and understanding God's response. Belief is uncertain, the initial condition of the mind when it tries to speculate about God; but faith is the ultimate immutable conviction attained after the devotee knows God for certain by contacting Him in meditation.

When a devotee deeply meditates and intensely prays, he intuitively knows the presence of God as a feeling of unsurpassed joy that comes over him. By repeated intuitive communion with God as tangible ever new Joy, this blissful Presence in meditation inspires in the devotee an expanded faith or intuitive conviction of the infinite existence of God in His absolute Essence.

And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: "Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican.

"The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank Thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.'

"And the publican, standing off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, 'God be merciful to me a sinner.'

*"I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted" (Luke 18:9–14).**

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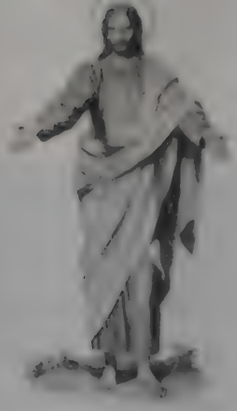
* This last verse is repeated in Luke 14:11 (see Discourse 58 for additional commentary).

The publican, though of less virtue than the Pharisee, nevertheless had humbleness and sincerity and thus created the good karma by which he was justified to receive the purifying vibration of God.

The proud Pharisee could not gather and hold on the mountain-top of his ego the raindrops of divine blessings showered equally over him and the publican, whereas the drops of mercy settled copiously in the deep valley of the publican's humble heart.

A pretentious man who imagines himself to be great is a fool in the eyes of God and of his own soul. He who is saturated with a natural humility exudes a divine magnetism, that special something throbbing behind his eyes and demeanour, that draws appreciation and recognition both human and divine.

Jesus, in upholding the sincere prayer of the sinful publican and depreciating the egotistical prayer of the Pharisee, does not imply that the opprobrious publican was superior in virtue to the law-abiding Pharisee. Jesus meant only to emphasize the value of humility in attracting divine mercy. To be both law-abiding and humble is to cultivate one's ideal soul-nature.



DISCOURSE 62

Jesus Speaks of Soul Union as the Original Purpose of Marriage

"He that is able to receive it, let him receive it"

Understanding the Deep Metaphysical Truths Behind Jesus' Teaching on Marriage

❖

Ideals for a Spiritually Harmonious Marriage

❖

Highest Form of "Spiritual Marriage": Union of the Soul With Spirit

❖

By Meditation One Can Regain the Purity of "Little Children" and the Lost Eden of Bliss

❖

Jesus' Reply to the Sadducees: Does the Marriage Relationship Endure After Death?

"True marriage serves as a spiritual device for perfecting the full expression of souls and freeing them into God...through restoration, realization, of their divine nature assisted by the companionship of the ideal helpmate."

The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, "Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?"

And he answered and said unto them, "Have ye not read, that He which made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, 'For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh'? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder."

They say unto him, "Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away?"

He saith unto them, "Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so. And I say unto you, whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery."

His disciples say unto him, "If the case of the man be so with his wife, it is not good to marry."

But he said unto them, "All men cannot receive this saying, save they to whom it is given. For there are some eunuchs, which were so born from their mother's womb: and there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men: and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it."

Then were there brought unto him little children, that he should put his hands on them, and pray: and the disciples rebuked them.

But Jesus said, "Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven." And he laid his hands on them, and departed thence.

—Matthew 19:3–15

Then come unto him the Sadducees, which say there is no resurrection; and they asked him, saying, "Master, Moses wrote unto us, if a man's brother die, and leave his wife behind him, and leave no children, that his brother should take his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother. Now there were seven brethren: and the first took a wife, and dying left no seed. And the second took her, and died, neither left he any seed: and the third likewise. And the seven had her, and left no seed: last of all the woman died also. In the resurrection therefore, when they shall rise, whose wife shall she be of them? For the seven had her to wife."

And Jesus answering said unto them, "Do ye not therefore err, because ye know not the scriptures, neither the power of God? For when they shall rise from the dead, they neither marry, nor are given in marriage; but are as the angels which are in heaven. And as touching the dead, that they rise: have ye not read in the book of Moses, how in the bush God spake unto him, saying, 'I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living: ye therefore do greatly err."

—Mark 12:18–27

DISCOURSE 62

Jesus Speaks of Soul Union as the Original Purpose of Marriage

"He that is able to receive it, let him receive it"

The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, "Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?"

And he answered and said unto them, "Have ye not read, that He which made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, 'For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh'? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." *

They say unto him, "Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away?"

He saith unto them, "Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so. And I say unto you, whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery" (Matthew 19:3–9).†

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* Jesus is citing Genesis 1:27 and 2:24.

† Cf. parallel references in Mark 10:2–12 and Luke 16:18.

66 Have you not read that from the beginning of creation, God created soul mates among males and females and signified that due to the divine soul attraction between a man and his mate, he will leave father and mother and cling to his wife? When a man and wife are united as true soul mates they will be one flesh, they will act in harmony and unison in body, mind, and soul; their souls will not act with different ideals, but as two bodies, two minds, two souls, with one ideal.

The ideal of soul mates and the origin of divorce

"Therefore, when a true male soul mate is united to his true female soul companion as the mundane way of liberation by spiritual union that perfects the expression of the complete Spirit-nature of each soul, then according to divine decree, let that law be not desecrated and nullified by an ignorant man's mistaken interpretation of the law of divorcement given by Moses. Because you have lost the pure love and feeling God placed in your heart and your soul, Moses gave you a bill of divorcement. He found that you no longer possessed the divine magnetism required to draw your soul mates unto yourselves and instead found your impure hearts attracting wrong companions, resulting in matrimonial troubles; so he gave you the law of divorcement lest you maltreat your mismated wives.

"In the beginning when God created man and woman, there was no law of divorcement necessary, because original man and woman were to lead natural lives with uplifted spiritual consciousness free from the dangers of sex-motivated mismating and necessity of separation.

"Anyone who puts away his or her properly mated spouse, except it be for sex transgression, and marries another, commits adultery; that is, such a person breaks the law of love in soul union for the sake of sexual stimulation by a new mismated physical marriage. Likewise, anyone who marries someone who was divorced because of infidelity, being attracted to that licentious person for the satisfaction of lust, instead of trying to find and marry one's own soul mate, is also guilty of adultery."

Understanding the deep metaphysical truths behind Jesus' teaching on marriage

In these verses, Jesus cites the original divine law that marriage should be the union between soul mates who are attracted to each other by divine magnetism and not by the animal magnetism of sex. To understand rightly the meaning of his words about marriage, divorce, and adultery, one must know the profound metaphysical truths concerning the

creation and divine purpose of man. These were enunciated by the Vedic *rishis* and also encapsulated in the Book of Genesis, whose verses Jesus himself referred to in replying to the Pharisees.

As explained in the commentary on the opening verses of Saint John's Gospel—"Genesis According to Saint John"*—before the beginning of creation the Spirit was One: ever-existing, ever-conscious, ever-new Bliss. But He thought within Himself: "Verily, I am Joy; but there is none to enjoy Me." As He thought this, He became divided into Creator and created, Transcendent Spirit and Cosmic Vibratory Nature. By cloaking a portion of His unmanifested consciousness with the illusion of difference, or particulars, Spirit manifested finite objects, using the law of duality and relativity to differentiate His One Consciousness and Cosmic Energy into countless pairs of polarized forces and forms: positive and negative elements, male and female, man and woman.

The universal everything is made of the singular consciousness of God. When a spark of that consciousness is individualized by God, it becomes a soul, capable of ultimately expressing the God-image in which it is made. In essence, the soul is perfect and complete, an exact reflection of God's ever-existing, ever-conscious, ever-new bliss. But when incarnate, it takes on the dualistic nature of creation, outwardly expressing primarily either a masculine or feminine, positive or negative, half of its essence.

This is why it is said in Oriental scriptures that when God reflected His consciousness in created forms, they became "half-souls" by taking on through identification the qualities of the manifested units of creation—positive or negative, reason- or feeling-impregnated, male or female. These dual qualities are "soul mates" of each other to be eventually reunited—"they twain shall be one flesh" in order for the fully expressing soul to find liberation in Spirit.

God's creative manifestation is Omnipotent Force (God's Bliss stirred by the will to create) and Consciousness (Omniscient Feeling). These produce the Intelligent Cosmic Energy from the womb of which is born all manifestation. The souls of man and woman are made of these divine potentials, perfect individualized reflections of this threefold essence. The incarnate being experiences these as reason (discriminative will), feeling (that which makes man conscious and

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* See Discourse 1.

able to enjoy), and energy (the substance that creates and activates the bodily instrument).

When God divided Himself as man and woman, both dualities expressed the same unified consciousness, rather than the differentiation or polarity necessary to sustain the illusion of individuality in the manifested world. So He conceived a clever plan, a trick to keep man and woman different from each other and separate from Himself: He created superficial distinctions in their bodies and minds. When He made man, He used reason and feeling and cosmic energy, keeping reason uppermost and feeling hidden; that is why man's features manifest dispassionate reason. God made woman by using feeling, reason, and cosmic energy, keeping feeling uppermost and reason hidden; that is why her features express softness and call forth feeling. Reason, being aggressive, made man positive with positive sexual processes; and woman, with deep feeling, was negative and thus formed deep sexual recesses.*

Marriage is to bring out the hidden feeling in man and the hidden reason in woman

The ideal spiritual union between man and woman was ordained that man might bring out the hidden reason in woman, and that the woman might help man uncover his hidden feeling. By so aiding each other to develop a perfect balance of these pure divine soul qualities, they would transcend their delusive differentiation as man and woman and realize their true nature as inviolate souls. Liberation was to be accomplished by their becoming united first to each other in divine friendship, the purest expression of God's love shared between two individuals; and then, thus perfected, ready for the ultimate union with God.

It is clear from Jesus' references to Genesis in these verses that he was citing the law of true soul mates, the immutable law of spiritual love, which should motivate all marriages. This was, as Jesus emphasized, the divine law "at the beginning": that for every true man there was a true woman, and each one who lived rightly on earth would automatically be drawn together in soul-companionship with a mate by the operation and decree of this law. True marriage serves as a spiritual device for perfecting the full expression of souls and freeing them into God by proper union—a process of evolution through which souls projected away from God into creation would be brought

* See also Discourse 2, explanation of immaculate creation, direct materialisation.

back through restoration, realization, of their divine nature assisted by the companionship of the ideal helpmate.

Essential nature of each soul is complete and perfect, free from sex and duality

The concept of soul mates is entirely misleading without knowledge of the basic truth that it is only on the plane of creation, where the law of relativity prevails, that a soul identified with a form (*jivatman*) may be considered as being a male or female "half-soul." The true nature of the Self (the pure *atman*) as a reflection of Transcendent Spirit beyond the delusive requisites of the created worlds is free from sex and duality.

In Chapter 1 of Genesis, cited by Jesus in these verses, we read: "Male and female created He them..." (Genesis 1:27). This refers to the creation of these two natures in the spiritual (causal/astral) body, in which male and female natures were united—"at the beginning," Jesus emphasized. God created man and woman, the first pairs of ideal beings, as soul companions. Every vibratory particle, whether material or etherically spiritual, has a positive or a negative force or quality (male or female); and, whereas these were united in the spiritual body of divine beings,* these characteristics became separated, or differentiated, when God created the material human body. This dichotomy of masculine and feminine and their intended reunion by spiritual marriage is described in Chapter 2 of Genesis, from which Jesus also quoted: "And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; and the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made He a woman, and brought her unto the man....Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh" (Genesis 2:21–24).

He slept refers to the power of *avidya* (individual illusion as opposed to *maya,* or universal delusion), by which differentiation is made between man and woman. *Rib* means vibration. From the vibration of God-force that created man, or Adam, manifesting a reason-predominant nature, God drew forth a rib or feeling-predominant vibration to create woman.

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* Cf. commentary on Mark 12:25 (pages 1216 ff.): "For when they shall rise from the dead, they neither marry, nor are given in marriage; but are as the angels which are in heaven."

Thus man and woman are the two natures of God—reason (knowledge) and feeling (consciousness, emotional reaction)—expressed on the material plane in differentiated bodies. God gave the first human beings the power to commune with Him in spite of this delusion-imposed dual consciousness. He placed them in paradise—the unified consciousness of the soul manifesting in the awakened spiritual eye and the pure divine expression of the causal-astral body. In the original plan of creation, man and woman, ideal soul mates, were to lead a heavenly life by keeping their minds in the divine region of Bliss-Will in the forehead. Spiritual marriage consisted in the feminine force or feeling uniting with the masculine force or reason and thus becoming whole in oneness with God. The souls that went out of God were to be brought back to God by the process of harmony in body, mind, and soul.

The harmonious balance of reason and feeling leads to intuitive perception and the ability to know what is Truth. Achieving this balance, men and women become gods. In the unbalanced human consciousness, the feminine quality, or feeling, loses its calm intuitive powers under the influence of the restlessness of body consciousness and emotional excitation; and the masculine attribute, or reason, loses its calm intuitive powers when it succumbs to the restlessness of body consciousness and egotistical self-sufficiency. The original man and woman fell from the awareness of their divine state by physical misuse of the sex force, forfeiting the heavenly union of reason and feeling and becoming identified with their material body rather than their heavenly causal-astral consciousness with its faculty of intuitive perception of God and knowledge of their souls as one with Him.*

The contrasting roles of soul union and sex union in spiritual marriage and social marriage

When two souls come together and bring out the wholeness in each other and ultimately unite with Spirit, that union is a true marriage between soul mates. Soul companions, being primarily united in Spirit and love, find the ever new joy of God as the breath of their existence. The more strongly they become united in Spirit the less they concentrate on sex life. Soul companions in perfect marriage—even if they have sexual union for the propagation of spiritual children to bring good souls to earth—have their minds primarily engaged and engrossed in the perfect love of God.

* See Discourses 2 and 7, explanation of the fall of Adam and Eve.

The culmination of marriage between soul mates is distinguished by the fact that the husband and wife no longer live on the sexual plane—not by forced abstinence, but in transcendence. Being together in perfect love, they become united with God. Any so-called soul mates who have not yet extinguished their sexual appetites are not truly united as soul mates. A marriage that is very harmonious but without God-realization may be a moral marriage, an ideal socioreligious relationship on the human level, but falls short of being an actual spiritual marriage between soul mates, the end of which is liberation in God.

In his words to the Pharisees, Jesus automatically assumes that any tie between man and woman rightfully called marriage is to be primarily based on the spiritual laws of divine union. He meant that a mismated union—one in which man and woman come together principally for the satisfaction of lust—is not a real marriage as intended by God: a divine institution for propagation of the species and to offer ideal soul mates liberation into the spiritual world. Matrimony without a foundation of spiritual life is not true soul-marriage but chance union as exists in the animal kingdom. By indiscriminate opportunistic breeding, animals produce perfectly good offspring and propagate their own kind; but the original marriage institution decreed by God for man—His special creation, above the animals, capable of expressing divinity—was formulated by the Divine Father of creation on a basis of spiritual love. A marriage without spiritual love remains on the level of Nature's law of animal union and cannot be termed a divine true marriage, a union of souls.

The foregoing must be remembered in reading Jesus' words about divorce. Though it was permitted by the law of Moses, Jesus again emphasizes that "from the beginning it was not so." Improper marriages and consequent separations were not a part of God's original plan. Divinely enlightened beings of advanced vanished civilisations in higher ages, unknown to history, lived more natural, spiritual lives in harmony with God's will. Men and women were mated rightly so there was no cause for or necessity of divorce. But with the decline of civilisations, in cosmic aeonic cycles of rising and falling, people became materially minded, due to the misuse of their will and reason. Owing to the impurity of their hearts, they could not draw unto themselves their rightful soul companions.

Spiritual meaning of Jesus' words about adultery and divorce

This was the condition in Moses' time, for which he found it necessary to give the conditional law of divorcement as the means of

saving mismated wives from the tyranny of abusive husbands and to protect husbands from their mismated cruel wives—specifically for either partner being guilty of fornication in mind or body.

"Fornication" implies coition wherein partners are not married to each other. However, when Jesus said, "Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery," he was speaking more specifically of true spiritual marriage, as described above. He meant: "If any soul, having found and joined with a true spiritual soul companion according to the divine purpose of marriage, forsakes that mate under the influence of temptation and marries another for the satisfaction of lust, he or she breaks the law of holy union in God and is thrown into the pit of the sin of adultery with its karmic consequences."

Ordinarily, persons go through a process of selection of companions and the misery and trials of a wrong marriage or marriages until they spiritualize their consciousness sufficiently to attract a true soul companion. It is only after soul mates have come together in spiritual marriage—whether for the first marriage or after the experiences of untenable wrong marriages—that if they separate through sex temptations they commit adultery and foil the only purpose of all spiritual marriages: liberation in God by real matrimonial union.

The very word "adulterate" means to debase, corrupt, or make impure. Great prophets warn against improper use of sex not because the procreative force is inherently evil—having become nature's way of propagating the species when man lost his spiritual creative power of direct materialisation—but because when dissipated indiscriminately it vitiates the heavenly soul consciousness and deludes man by identification with the sensual physical body and material world.

Consequently, Jesus implies that when a man and woman have coition primarily to satisfy sexual instincts, it is, metaphysically speaking, "fornication." The intended union of souls, the true mating, is forsaken to cohabit instead with the senses of the physical body—unfaithfulness to the true marriage partner, the soul, by lustful cohabitation with the body. The minds of the parties involved, being wholly concentrated on the sensual physical expulsion of life force, fall from the heavenly joy of spiritual union. The stronger the sex union, the more the disunion in Spirit. Adulterous union is diametrically opposed to the divine union of soul mates in spiritual marriage. In the state of consciousness from which Jesus was speaking, on the high esoteric

plane of truth, marriages that are not spiritual marriages between ideal soul companions and in which sexual indulgence eclipses the higher goal are "adulterous," and are to be spiritualized if a married man and woman are to find divorce-free lasting happiness and soul evolution together. Thus, socioreligious marriage alone does not free one from metaphysical adultery; but spiritual marriage, which has as its object a gradual rising above sexual impulses to lift up the consciousness and reenter the Eden of God-union, ultimately frees one from the "original sin" of the fall of Adam and Eve inherited by ensuing adulterous generations.

This is neither to disparage the modern institution of marriage, nor to discourage the practice of its noble ideals as commonly understood in man's present state of evolution. Some structure of commitment sanctified by vows before God is not only commendable but essential to constrain spiritually man's wayward inclinations. Comparatively few beings are able to outstrip the snail pace of natural evolution and live ahead to the time when the commonality on earth will be a return to the lost Eden of divine consciousness.

Right interpretation of absolute truths for the present stage of human evolution

Nevertheless, Eternal Verities that were breathed forth in the pure ideas of God that informed the cosmos need to be reillumined from age to age, though their pristine character intrude without welcome on the mindset of a generation comfortable in its socially acceptable norms. Spiritual progress moves at a pace commensurate with man's willingness to displace effortless convenience of pleasurable impulses with higher aspirations. Absolutes light the way, though attainment be less than instant!

Thus, Jesus' statements express the pure absolutes of God's idealism in sending forth creation, extant in the beginning and in the highest evolutionary spiritual cycles (referred to in Hindu scriptures as Satya Yuga—in which man again lives in his soul essence). But the application of those absolutes, having devolved with the fall of man's consciousness, as noted by Jesus, requires in each age an interpretive code that, while highlighting and honouring immutable truth for those capable of such aspiration, acknowledges the current evolutionary stage of man's understanding and capacities. The Ten Commandments as expressed through Moses are an example of eternal spiritual laws adapted to assist man in regaining his lost pure divine consciousness

of the soul. In obeying the "Thou shalt not" of physical adultery, man takes the requisite step of fealty that empowers his self-control toward the attainment ultimately of self-mastery, soul realization.

Neither Jesus nor any other great master would expect celibacy from persons unprepared spiritually and emotionally for such lofty discipline (Jesus speaks of this discipline in the verses that follow).* Wise counsel is rather that of gradual overall sublimation of physical consciousness, including sex, into spiritual consciousness through daily practice of scientific methods of meditation along with cultivation of pure soul qualities. In marriage, spiritual aspirants should observe moderation in physical relations, and above all the culture of a spirit of love, service, loyalty, and divine friendship between husband and wife.

Ideals for a spiritually harmonious marriage

The spiritual purpose of family life is to expand one's consciousness through cultivation of purifying divine love and friendship that is not conditioned by sex or any selfish motivation. In marital coition, love should be uppermost. In time, as real love is cultivated, sex consciousness will wane naturally, replaced by the supreme joy of soul bliss and communion. When love, respect, and friendship are uppermost, the relationship will be successful and will progress surely toward fulfilment of the high divine purpose of marriage.

To love one's spouse with the pure love of God, and to share a marriage blessed by self-control through mental development, and to create spiritual children, is a noble way to live. To be drowned by material cares, weariness, overwork, greed for money, overindulgence in amusements, buying more things, and slaving for more money and saving no time for God leads marriage partners to the misery kingdom of Satan. A happy, contented, simple, harmonious married life of self-control and meditation leads them to God.

Success in marriage is very difficult if partners expect too much from their spouses. When each demands fulfilment from the other and that demand is not met, they become enemies. That is why I believe that a lasting and fulfilling marriage is in most cases impossible without spirituality—without a mutual effort to seek satisfaction of the soul's yearning for perfect love and the joy of fulfilment where alone it can be found: God-communion.

* See commentary on pages 1210 ff. regarding Jesus' words on those who "have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake."

The animal instinct of uncontrolled sexual appetites is the chief reason for failure of modern marriages. Those modern marriages that are born on the sexual plane usually end in some form of physical or mental separation when the sexual desires are sated. Wrong marriages, with disunion in love and soul compatibility, lead to misery and the destruction of families, the very fabric of society.

Errors in choosing matrimonial candidates, divorces, and multiple marriages are frantic misguided efforts arising from the soul's pure desire to find one's real life companion. Selfishness, lust, physical attraction, external beauty, financial lure in marriage, animal magnetism of the opposite sexes—these are the evil forces that misdirect a person from travelling in the right path that leads to the discovery of a proper soul companion.

Man and woman should lead ideal lives and marry only when they are sure they are compatible as soul companions. If man and woman are more spiritual and follow the law of soul attraction and not sex attraction, they will find the right marriage and progress toward freedom in God. Only then will divorces become fewer and fewer until they vanish.

Jesus previously warned that adultery is committed in mind as well as in body.* Delusion's temptation of untransmuted sexual attraction to someone other than one's own marital companion so distorts reason that it becomes a mental obsession, continuous and nearly unforsakable. If chronic and unrepented, this mental adultery, as surely as physical adultery, leads to irreconcilable disharmony and disunion, justification for divorcement from the erring spouse. Purity in body and mind is the only sure formula for union of true soul mates.

Jesus did not condemn justifiable divorce and remarriage of a spiritual mate

A husband and wife should be loyal to each other and try to make each other happy in every way. The spiritual wife should not forsake the unspiritual husband, nor should the spiritual husband forsake the unspiritual wife; they should try to influence and help each other as long as it is possible to do so. However, in speaking about divorce, Jesus never meant that a husband or wife who puts aside an ill-chosen wrong spouse, after having

* "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, 'Thou shalt not commit adultery': But I say unto you, that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart" (Matthew 5:27–28; see Discourse 27).

exhausted all efforts to bring spiritual harmony into a ruinous marriage, commits adultery if he or she later marries a true soul companion.

I know one very famous lady who was persuaded by her parents in her younger days to marry a man whom they incorrectly thought would be a good husband for her. But he wasted all her money and was lustful and never lived up to the vows of matrimony. One day in a spate of temper he tried to hit her with an uplifted chair. In the strength of divine innocence she fixed the spiritual power of her gaze deep into the personality of her husband and saw him for what he was, and that she was united to a wicked person. In a firm voice she said, "I recognise you now; get out." The upraised hands of the husband froze; he dropped the chair and ran out of the home, in utmost dread and fear, never to return again. He could not stand the penetrating magnetic spiritual vibrations of the wife.

Long afterward, this lady developed greatly in spirituality and attracted an ideal soul companion. By my protracted observations I found that their marriage was a real union between soul mates. After temporarily living on the sexual plane, they have for years been living on the plane of love and spiritual communion, absolutely without sex relations. Every day they are as eager to see each other as though newly married; and when they come together they feel in their unity the God within them. I am certain that Jesus would not have condemned this just divorce, and would have blessed her spiritual remarriage.

However, the truth about spiritual marriages and soul companions—that in every man and woman there is a pattern whose counterpart exists somewhere in another person—should not be abused by anyone. Lustful individuals indulge and consequently stimulate their sex consciousness by seeking new sexual companions—often under the guise of searching for their soul mates. Such persons even discover "soul mates" in the alleys, saloons, and dance halls of questionable repute. The instinctive desire to find the perfect soul companion, being heaven-born, can never be satisfied by any amount of lustful experiences. Promiscuity is disgraceful and degrading to the pure image of God in man's soul.

As the fulfilment of the union of soul mates is spiritual and not physical, the consummation does not necessarily require the coming together in a marriage partnership on the material plane. Sometimes even a chance meeting between soul mates fills one with a sense of completeness and pure love that wholly vanquishes all sense of need for

physical union. This is true of relationships that have evolved through past lives as soul helpmates. One such instance was brought about by the intercession of my guru, Sri Yukteswarji. A man tormented with debauched desires sought the help of Master. He told the man, "When you find your soul companion, you will lose all consciousness of lust." One day he was with Master at the railroad station. There was a train on the siding in which a beautiful girl was sitting at one of the windows. Master exclaimed to the man, "There she is, the one you have been seeking. Look at her!" The man was transfixed in an emotion of joy. From that time on, he led a saintly life devoted to God.

Soul mates living on different parts of the earth, or even if one is on earth and the other in the astral world, may come together in a liberating union of God's love. The ideal man or woman who does not live on the sexual plane develops a spiritual magnetism by which he or she can attract the right soul mate on the earth plane or the dream plane or astral plane or the plane of conscious visions experienced in deep meditation. In the meeting of one's soul mate by whatever means, there will be no further desire to live according to worldly norms on the material plane. The reunion of masculine-feminine, positive-negative, reason and feeling, brings forth the immutable image of God in the soul. There is no necessity for physical marriage at all. It will be consummated right within one's heart.

There is an even higher way of fulfilment than spiritual union of soul companions on the physical plane: union with God by divine communion in meditation and ecstasy. Seeking soul liberation through union with a soul mate is a spiritually dangerous course for those who are not already advanced in wisdom, for temptation may cause them to sink into the delusion of wrong living that will take them away from God into the karmic bondage of further reincarnations. But once the soul of man or woman is united with God, the Consummate Soul Mate, that soul never can fall from liberation. This is why Jesus, Swami Shankara, and other saviours have shown this highest path of liberation by uniting their souls directly with God alone.

Highest form of "spiritual marriage": union of the soul with Spirit

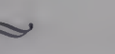
This method of perfection and matrimony with God is the holiest marriage, between soul and Spirit, where God is the Divine Beloved, positive and masculine, and all human souls are negative and feminine, beloved spouses of God. This concept is posited on the duality

of the cosmic creative principle: Spirit and Nature. Spirit, being the source and upholder of manifestation, is the Positive Masculine Absolute, whose active creativity is His outgoing Negative Feminine Power, Nature, of which all incarnate souls are a part. Together, Positive Spirit and Negative Nature with their offspring of masculine and feminine forms and forces propagate the grand universal scheme.

Essentially, therefore, we are all the brides of God. He is the Divine Lover perpetually wed to every soul, never forsaking any soul though it forsake Him in its adulterous roaming in delusion. God as the Perfect Lover pursues each soul through incarnations until it returns to Him. Of all the love that has ever been promised, pure love, love that is eternal, is found at last in God. He is all the love of all the lovers that ever loved. When the soul meets Him, it knows He is the One it was waiting to meet.

If one lives rightly and learns the higher forms of meditation, one develops the spiritual magnetism that neutralizes the animal magnetism of the physical body. With freedom from the "original sin" of sex attraction, one finds the true soul mate in a spiritual marriage on earth, or in a dream or vision, or in the astral world; or supremely, in direct union with God. The love and friendship with the Divine cultivated in the bower of meditation can never be lost. It shall last beyond the portals of the tomb unto Eternity.

The full implication of the words of Jesus, an impossible view for body-bound spiritually nearsighted persons, is best understood by those who meditate deeply and merge their concentration in the Christ Consciousness which Jesus possessed. Otherwise, much truth is lost in misinterpretation, mistranslation, or shallow cognition.



His disciples say unto him, "If the case of the man be so with his wife, it is not good to marry."

But he said unto them, "All men cannot receive this saying, save they to whom it is given. For there are some eunuchs, which were so born from their mother's womb: and there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men: and there be eunuchs which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it" (Matthew 19:10–12).

66 All men and women cannot grasp this precept of which I speak except those who are worthy, being physically, mentally, and spiritually fit to live up to it. There are some eunuchs that were forced to be so since they were born that way from their mothers' womb. And there are some eunuchs which were made so by other men through artificial means of operation.

Jesus extols the self-mastery of celibacy for those who are capable of it

"And there are eunuchs who have of their own free will made themselves celibate by withdrawing their minds, will, and energy from the sex region, that with the elevation of their life force and consciousness, forsaking temporary sex pleasure created by satanic delusion to keep man body-bound, they may receive the everlasting joy of God's kingdom of Cosmic Consciousness. Anyone who is worthy and able to understand this precept, let him follow it and he will find the kingdom of God."

After alluding to the original ideal of spiritual marriage (for attaining soul union and perfect love in God as one means of liberation for worldly people), Jesus goes on to commend those men and women who completely renounce the husband-wife relationship of marriage and seek direct union with God through the self-mastery of celibacy.

A man or woman, singly, by completely renouncing sex pleasure and practising those spiritual disciplines that unite the soul with God, finds perfect divine love and liberation in that consummate union. In linking celibacy with the attainment of the kingdom of God, Jesus emphasizes that the consciousness of sex must be sublimated by all people, married as well as celibate, in order to free the life force from this compelling impulse that binds the consciousness to the physical body. Spiritual eunuchs are those who withdraw their will, energy, desire, and sex force completely from the sex nerves by proper methods of natural sublimation, such as yoga, so that they no longer feel any overbearing physical impulse of sex. Spiritual eunuchs are not those who maim their sex power and become eunuchs because of impotency, but are those who attain self-mastery by such means as daily meditation and ecstasy and thereby never permit sexual desires to rouse their physical sex nerves.

All persons may learn to govern sex urge by wisdom, the pure intuitive intelligence that discriminates in guiding the will to choose the liberating bliss of Spirit "for the kingdom of heaven's sake" instead of the enslaving sensual pleasure of the gross physical body. Anyone who

practises physical culture exercises with deep concentration during times of temptation can transmute the sex energy into muscular energy and general vitality. Or during the appearance of sex consciousness in the body, one may sublimate that force into great mental power by concentratedly engaging the attention in creative work, such as writing or music or art. Or the wayward sex force may be used propitiously to create the spiritual power of self-control, mastery of body consciousness, by being transmuted in meditation—the taintless life force then being absorbed in the higher states of consciousness in the subtle centres in the spine and brain.*

Jesus himself embraced a life of celibacy, never allowing intrusion of the pleasures of the flesh that would pull his consciousness from its seat in the inner kingdom of God. The Order of Swamis in India also emphasizes the renouncement of sex consciousness for the attainment of the everlasting joy of Cosmic Consciousness.

When I asked my guru, Swami Sri Yukteswarji, to make me a swami, he tested my resolve and asked my reasons for not marrying. I thought of a lot of reasons; but principally I somehow felt I had outgrown it—I could not allot God a secondary place in my life. Master spoke of the many who renounce the world and lead selfish lives dependent on society to look after them while offering nothing in return. Married people, he said, have to renounce much in sacrifice for each other and responsibility for the welfare of their families. The family unit is a micro-organisation in which all must do their part. The world itself could not go on if everyone were selfish and did not participate in the services essential to the

Those who renounce family life should give unselfish service to society

* Medical doctors consider it a well-established fact that replenishing the seminal fluid, a concentration of vital bodily elements, requires a significant expenditure of physical energy; and that the body will reabsorb the constituent vital materials if they are conserved in the body rather than dissipated outwardly, making their inherent energy available for other purposes. The *pranayama* techniques integral to yoga (taught as part of the science of *Kriya Yoga* in the *Yogoda Satsanga Society of India Lessons*) automatically induce the process of transmutation of the conserved energy into pure life force and consciousness for awakening of the higher centres of consciousness in the spine and brain. One of the basic disciplines of Patanjali's Eightfold Path of Yoga is *brahmacharya* (self-restraint); yoga treatises refer to the successful celibate *brahmachari* as *urdhvareta* (literally, "keeping the semen upward"), one in whom the physical reproductive fluid is converted into pure conscious life force, bestowing bodily strength, immense creative intelligence, and spiritual magnetism. *(Publisher's Note)*

harmony and welfare of society. After Master had made these points, he concluded, "Remember that he who rejects the usual worldly duties can justify himself only by assuming some kind of responsibility for a much larger family."

I started with a residential school that quickly grew into a family of three hundred children. I cared for them as father-mother-friend-spiritual instructor. I was on call to their needs day and night. I had never imagined in all my dreams what our parents go through for us. The mother sleeps just a little bit; and then the baby wakes up and cries, and the mother has to renounce her need for rest to respond. With what patience and tender love most of our mothers have raised us, and the sacrifices our fathers made to support us. We do not realize that until we have children of our own. If we do not choose family life, that does not condone a selfish existence. Those who are single can work out their evolution by extending their interests in service to others among God's children. The propagation of the species means not only to give birth through one's own body, but to leave in others something of one's nobler ideals and example—just as it is the duty of parents to instil the better part of themselves in their children. The teacher does likewise; he leaves to posterity his thoughts and ideas propagated in others. An exemplary life of service and love for God is a divine inheritance bequeathed to the world.

The privilege of life God has given to us bears with it a great responsibility. I well understood what this entailed when I identified my life with caring for the children of my How-to-Live School. They metaphorically took half of my life; half of my salvation I had to give to them. Now with the many souls God has sent into my large world family, I save nothing for myself. My gain is in my loss for others, because they are my own self. This is the way to liberate oneself in unmarried life, uniting feeling and reason—love and will—by giving oneself to others, just as Jesus did. For those who are able to receive Jesus' edict to remain unmarried "for the kingdom of heaven's sake," service to humanity is their work. Their obligation is to be even more busy than are family members in their compact unit of society.

By God-contact in meditation and selfless service that gives birth in others to some of one's noblest ideas, one not only unites feeling and reason in oneself, but cultures in one's expanded family of spiritual children, feeling to balance the reason in men, and reason to balance the feeling in women. This is spiritual marriage, liberation

through union with God in ecstatic meditation, and renouncing the little self to serve Him as one's greater Self in others.

Jesus does not say it is wrong to marry and to bring good children into the world by Nature's ordinary law of procreation. But it is to be remembered that this creative principle is one of God's holiest laws. We must not think that there is sin in it, but there is inherent physical and spiritual danger in its misuse to stimulate and gratify sex consciousness for its own sake. That is detrimental to the nervous system and weakens the vitality and immune system in the body. Spiritually, it is impossible to lift the consciousness into the kingdom of heaven, the Eden of the higher centres of God-perception, without raising the life force from the lower spinal centres of sensual compulsions.

The healthy attitude toward sex relations for married persons on the spiritual path

Mastery in the marital state begins with moderation and self-control and the joyous contact with God in meditation. Hypocritical renunciation, attempted abstinence by the sense-tortured individual, is unnatural, even harmful; that is why Saint Paul said: "It is better to marry than to burn."* Moderation in married life, supported by tasting of the Infinite Bliss of deep meditation and the unconditioned divine love of God in the soul, transmutes the consciousness in a natural way. When the joy of God, felt in meditation with stillness of breath, remains continuously in the soul, then the physical temptation vanishes forever through contrast: The joy in God becomes more tempting than all temptations. One can even love husband or wife with the love of God and not love of flesh, as did Lahiri Mahasaya (my Guru's Guru). His marriage was to show people how the consciousness of God can tame temptation and how God's love can spiritualize and transmute conjugal love. When one is irrevocably established in union with Divine Bliss, that consciousness can exist under all conditions of life. Real freedom can be accomplished in no other way.

Then were there brought unto him little children, that he should put his hands on them, and pray: and the disciples rebuked them.

But Jesus said, "Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to

* I Corinthians 7:9.

*come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven." And he laid his hands on them, and departed thence (Matthew 19:13–15).**

Parallel reference:

And they brought young children to him, that he should touch them: and his disciples rebuked those that brought them.

But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein."

And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them (Mark 10:13–16).†

66 Allow little children to come unto me; do not keep them away. All men who have attained God's kingdom of Cosmic Consciousness are children in their simplicity and pure minds. Of truth I say unto you, anyone who tries to attain Cosmic Consciousness without being simple, nonattached, truthful, good, and trustful like a little child, cannot attain that divine state."

By meditation one can regain the purity of "little children" and the lost Eden of Bliss

Pure reason (Adam) and pure feeling (Eve) in the growing boy and girl live in the Eden of Bliss in attunement with the all-creative Divine Will in the spiritual eye, but as soon as youth indulges in dissolute thoughts, behaviour, and sexual experiences it falls from the Divine Centre of Bliss and becomes identified with the limitations of the restless desires of the flesh. Youth loses its paradise, casting itself out into the mortal hades of the sensual bondage of delusion, governed by the life force and consciousness being pulled downward and outward through the subtle coccygeal centre in the spine. Only by spiritual thoughts and actions and by meditation on God can one reverse this contrary force and restore the consciousness to its native Paradise.

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* Cf. Matthew 18:2–3 (Discourse 47): "And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, and said, 'Verily I say unto you, except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.'"

† Cf. additional parallel reference in Luke 18:15–17.

"Suffer the Little Children to Come Unto Me"

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But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein."

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—Mark 10:13–16

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—Paramahansa Yogananda

Drawing by Heinrich Hofmann

The Vedic ideal during the Golden Age in India was that every day even from earliest years spiritual consciousness was to be cultured in the child. Children were placed under qualified masters who taught them how to live by truth and self-control. At maturity, even if they then decided to marry, they maintained practice of those soul qualities as applied to marriage and householder responsibilities, never allowing their material life to bring them down from heaven. They married for love, and their souls entered into an ideal life. When their family duties had been met, with their own children settled in life, the parents retired to a forest hermitage or other place of spiritual seclusion for meditation; many also gave of themselves in service to humanity. In a God-centred life there is liberation.

Adults should learn by their own and society's mistakes and help children to understand and observe the spiritual purpose of marriage and the creative sex force. They are taught mathematics, history, literacy, but academic education does not give them the art and science of discriminative behaviour and self-control of sex. That should be taught in the schools everywhere and exemplified in the home. Out of such training and influences, ideal people will come.

When spiritual marriage of soul union in God is understood and cultured in unmarried or married life, sex is so completely and naturally sublimated in a greater joy of divine love that man and woman become again as "little children...for of such is the kingdom of heaven." Pure reason (Adam) and pure feeling (Eve) reunite in soul consciousness in union with the Will (reason) and Consciousness (feeling) that went out of God to create man and woman. The two are no longer so differentiated; in liberation from bodily identification, they are perfect children of God, made in the one and same immortal image of their Divine Creator.*

* Cf. Gospel of Thomas, verse 22: "Jesus saw infants being suckled. He said to his disciples, 'These infants being suckled are like those who enter the kingdom.' They said to him, 'Shall we, then, as children, enter the kingdom?' Jesus said to them, 'When you make the two one, and when you make the inside like the outside and the outside like the inside, and the above like the below, and when you make the male and female one and the same, so that the male will not be male nor the female be female....then you will enter [the kingdom].'" —J. M. Robinson, ed., *The Nag Hammadi Library in English* (HarperSanFrancisco, 1990). *(Publisher's Note)*

Then come unto him the Sadducees, which say there is no resurrection; and they asked him, saying, "Master, Moses wrote unto us, if a man's brother die, and leave his wife behind him, and leave no children, that his brother should take his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother. Now there were seven brethren: and the first took a wife, and dying left no seed. And the second took her, and died, neither left he any seed: and the third likewise. And the seven had her, and left no seed: last of all the woman died also. In the resurrection therefore, when they shall rise, whose wife shall she be of them? For the seven had her to wife."

*And Jesus answering said unto them, "Do ye not therefore err, because ye know not the scriptures, neither the power of God? For when they shall rise from the dead, they neither marry, nor are given in marriage; but are as the angels which are in heaven. And as touching the dead, that they rise: have ye not read in the book of Moses, how in the bush God spake unto him, saying, 'I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living: ye therefore do greatly err" (Mark 12:18–27).**

Jesus chided the Sadducees for having made a rudimentary blunder by mixing earthly edicts with heavenly experiences. They understood neither the scriptures they quoted nor the transcendent power and wisdom of God, and so their assumption was faulty in trying to link earthly with heavenly matters.

Jesus' reply to the Sadducees: Does the marriage relationship endure after death?

Physical marriage practised in this world is meant for the self-controlled propagation of the species and for assisting one another to learn the selflessness of love in faithfulness, giving, and sharing; and for the advanced few, it is one means of soul union for liberation after finding the perfect love of God by intense spiritual discipline, sexual sublimation, and meditation. Couples learn many lessons in the marriage partnership, such as uniting feeling and reason (positive and negative) to make two flesh as one through mutual respect and unselfish cooperation. But the resurrection Jesus referred to in his response to the Sadducees was of

* Cf. parallel references in Matthew 22:23–33 and Luke 20:27–40.

souls that have already found liberation in the perfect love of God and can enter into heaven freed from further reincarnation on earth. Hence, the physical discipline of marriage—or even divine seeking in meditation—is wholly unnecessary for those souls who have become immortals in "heaven." When the fruit comes, the flower falls. Human experiences of marriage, love, success, study, meditation, exercise, discipline, all are necessary to produce the fruit of Self-realization. But when enlightenment is attained, and subsequently liberation, all human experiences in the realm of delusion, having served their purpose, are no more.

Every liberated soul in heaven is married to God. Hence there can be no question of physical marriage for those souls who are complete and perfect in their union with the eternal love of God—the One Perfect Soul Mate.

Souls liberated from earthly ties and promoted to live in the finer vibration of the astral heaven enjoy that sphere with exquisitely refined astral sensibilities. They are able to create according to their slightest desire any object, scene, or luminous atmospheric condition by the sheer exercise of their will. Through the powers of their supramental astral bodies they can materialise other astral bodies by will power. Only on the earth plane is sexual union a requisite for physical birth. In the heaven of liberated souls, all have the same spiritual status—immortality—and are equal in the eyes of God. Jesus was certainly speaking of these supremely resurrected beings when he said they "are as the angels which are in heaven."

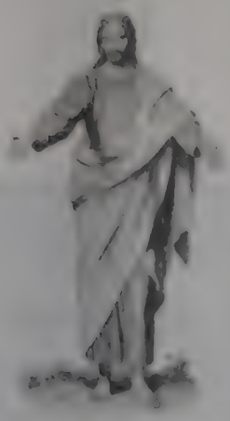
Of the other many souls in the various regions of heaven, or the astral world, they are there only temporarily to rest awhile before returning to earth's disciplinary experiences to continue the struggle for liberation. For example, the hypothetical woman mentioned in the question posed by the Sadducees—a childless widow of the seven brothers—would in the astral world be a sexless soul with an astral body, and thus she could not be the wife of any one man there. Indeed, throughout her numerous earth incarnations she no doubt would have been the wife of many, many husbands (or even a husband herself in some incarnations as a man!). If during her earth life this widow had not found spiritual emancipation, then, after a karmically predetermined respite in the after-death state, she would have to reincarnate on earth, most likely as a woman. She would have a fresh opportunity to live rightly, perhaps to find the perfect love of God and liberation

with the aid of a soul companion, or in direct union with God through concentrated spiritual endeavour.

The souls of all men and women in reality belong to God alone —in spite of certain spiritual affinities between soul companions. Hence, in the after-death astral state, the souls of men and women are reminded of their sexless immortality; "marriage," with all its mortal connotations, becomes impossible there. Nevertheless, souls who are deeply in love with each other or who share bonds of pure friendship during their stay on the earth plane will recognise each other and continue to feel the love and divine friendship imprinted on their souls, even in the astral world after death.

It is said that the Sadducees were especially antagonistic toward the doctrine of resurrection preached by Jesus. He put forth the argument that all things coming out of the living God must themselves be "living," even after so-called death. When souls pass through the portals of physical death, they merely change place and form, resurrected into that new existence. Jesus tried to make the Sadducees understand that as the prophets such as Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, are not dead but living in God, so all souls who pass from this world are everlasting in the ever-living God, either in heaven or in reincarnated forms on earth. Souls cannot die.

Jesus reminded the priests that the book of Moses relates how God vibrated His presence as the ever-burning light of wisdom igniting the bush of ignorance in the consciousness of Moses. Through His vibrations, God signified to Moses: "I am the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob who were incarnate on earth. Though their physical forms returned to the dust of mortality, their souls are living in Me. I am Life Eternal and all things coming out of Me are ever-living." Jesus concludes, "Hence, He is not the God of the dead, but of the living."



DISCOURSE 63

Exchanging Temporal Wealth for the Riches of God's Kingdom

The Blessings Inherent in God's Commandments

Universality of Rules of Conduct Taught by Moses, Jesus, and India's Science of Yoga

❖

Yoga Begins With Moral Rules, and Gives the Further Practices Needed for God-realization

❖

"Take Up the Cross": The Practice of Inner Renunciation, Self-Discipline, and Nonattachment

❖

The Spiritual Powers or Stage of Enlightenment Conferred by Mastery of Each Commandment

"Divine laws....are given to enable man to live in this world of cosmic delusion and satanic temptation as God's child, manifesting His image of divine qualities, rather than being helplessly identified with the flesh."

And, behold, one came and said unto him, "Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?"

And he said unto him, "Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is, God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments."

He saith unto him, "Which?"

Jesus said, "'Thou shalt do no murder,' 'Thou shalt not commit adultery,' 'Thou shalt not steal,' 'Thou shalt not bear false witness,' 'Honour thy father and thy mother': and, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.'"

The young man saith unto him, "All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet?"

Jesus said unto him, "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me."

But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions.

Then said Jesus unto his disciples, "Verily I say unto you, that a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven. And again I say unto you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God."

When his disciples heard it, they were exceedingly amazed, saying, "Who then can be saved?"

But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, "With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible."

Then answered Peter and said unto him, "Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?"

And Jesus said unto them, "Verily I say unto you, that ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit ever-

lasting life. But many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first.

"For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which went out early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard. And when he had agreed with the labourers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard.

"And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing idle in the marketplace, and said unto them; 'Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right I will give you.' And they went their way. Again he went out about the sixth and ninth hour, and did likewise.

"And about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing idle, and saith unto them, 'Why stand ye here all the day idle?' They say unto him, 'Because no man hath hired us.' He saith unto them, 'Go ye also into the vineyard; and whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive.'

"So when even was come, the lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, 'Call the labourers, and give them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first.' And when they came that were hired about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny. But when the first came, they supposed that they should have received more; and they likewise received every man a penny.

"And when they had received it, they murmured against the goodman of the house, saying, 'These last have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day.'

"But he answered one of them, and said, 'Friend, I do thee no wrong: didst not thou agree with me for a penny? Take that thine is, and go thy way: I will give unto this last, even as unto thee. Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good?'

"So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen."

And Jesus going up to Jerusalem took the twelve disciples apart in the way, and said unto them, "Behold, we go up to

Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify him: and the third day he shall rise again."

—Matthew 19:16—20:19

And Jesus entered and passed through Jericho. And, behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus, which was the chief among the publicans, and he was rich. And he sought to see Jesus who he was; and could not for the press, because he was little of stature. And he ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him: for he was to pass that way.

And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, "Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for today I must abide at thy house."

And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully. And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying, that he was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner.

And Zacchaeus stood, and said unto the Lord: "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold."

And Jesus said unto him, "This day is salvation come to this house, forsomuch as he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."

And as they heard these things, he added and spake a parable, because he was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear.

He said therefore, "A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, 'Occupy till I come.' But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, 'We will not have this man to reign over us.'

"And it came to pass, that when he was returned, having received the kingdom, then he commanded these servants to be called unto him, to whom he had given the money, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading. Then came the first, saying, 'Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds.' And he said unto him, 'Well, thou good servant: because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities.' And the second came, saying, 'Lord, thy pound hath gained five pounds.' And he said likewise to him, 'Be thou also over five cities.'

"And another came, saying, 'Lord, behold, here is thy pound, which I have kept laid up in a napkin: For I feared thee, because thou art an austere man: thou takest up that thou layedst not down, and reapest that thou didst not sow.' And he saith unto him, 'Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant. Thou knewest that I was an austere man, taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not sow: Wherefore then gavest not thou my money into the bank, that at my coming I might have required mine own with usury?'

"And he said unto them that stood by, 'Take from him the pound, and give it to him that hath ten pounds.' (And they said unto him, 'Lord, he hath ten pounds.') 'For I say unto you, that unto every one which hath shall be given; and from him that hath not, even that he hath shall be taken away from him. But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me.'"

And when he had thus spoken, he went before, ascending up to Jerusalem.

—Luke 19:1–28

DISCOURSE 63

Exchanging Temporal Wealth for the Riches of God's Kingdom

The Blessings Inherent in God's Commandments

And, behold, one came and said unto him, "Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?"

And he said unto him, "Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is, God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments."

He saith unto him, "Which?"

Jesus said, "'Thou shalt do no murder,' 'Thou shalt not commit adultery,' 'Thou shalt not steal,' 'Thou shalt not bear false witness,' 'Honour thy father and thy mother': and, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.'"

The young man saith unto him, "All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet?"

Jesus said unto him, "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me."

But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions.

Then said Jesus unto his disciples, "Verily I say unto you, that a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven. And again I say unto you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God."

When his disciples heard it, they were exceedingly amazed, saying, "Who then can be saved?"

But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, "With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible" (Matthew 19:16–26).

Parallel reference:

And when he was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, "Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?"

And Jesus said unto him, "Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is, God. Thou knowest the commandments, 'Do not commit adultery,' 'Do not kill,' 'Do not steal,' 'Do not bear false witness,' 'Defraud not,' 'Honour thy father and mother.'"

And he answered and said unto him, "Master, all these have I observed from my youth."

Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, "One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me."

And he was sad at the saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions.

And Jesus looked round about, and saith unto his disciples, "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!"

And the disciples were astonished at his words. But Jesus, answereth again, and saith unto them, "Children, how hard it is for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God."

And they were astonished out of measure, saying among themselves, "Who then can be saved?"

*And Jesus looking upon them saith, "With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible" (Mark 10:17–27).**

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* Cf. additional parallel reference in Luke 18:18–27.

66 "Why are you calling me good? Give credit to God, the Sole Good without whom no good can exist. If you want to reunite your life with Everlasting Life, follow the commandments, the eternal laws of goodness by which ordinary life-and-death consciousness can be spiritualized into consciousness of immortality.

"You know the moral commandments of righteous behaviour: Commit not murder, which bespeaks your loss of cosmic love for all, the power to see God in all. Commit not adultery, for by identifying yourself with sex pleasure you are deluded into forgetting the ever new bliss of the perfect image of God present within your soul. Steal not, for it casts you into the pit of selfishness, and you lose sight of the vast Self that can be recognised only through sympathy and giving. Bear not false witness, for when you put a veil of falsehood over your consciousness, it shrouds the presence of divine truth within you. Defraud no one, for the delusion of insincerity overclouds the insight of the discriminative wisdom of your soul. Honour your father and mother, for they are the physical manifestation of God who looks after you through the fatherly reason and the unconditional love of the mother. Love your neighbour as your own self; be not concentrated on your little self, but united with the Spirit in all by loving all.*

Purpose of moral commandments is fulfilled by freeing the consciousness from materiality

"Though you say you have obeyed these dictums, you find something yet lacking. To regain the innate perfection of your soul, go and sell everything you have and give the proceeds to the poor; deny the power that materiality wields over your consciousness, and you will obtain the treasure of Cosmic Consciousness and its everlasting bliss. Take up the cross—adopt the mental attitude and determination to renounce mortal attachments—and follow my ways of spiritual discipline so that you may realize the God-oneness of the Christ Consciousness in your own soul as in me.†

"Verily I say unto you, my disciples, that—as you see by the mentality of the rich young man who is loath to give up his temporal possessions for everlasting opulence in God—as long as man is satisfied

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* See also Discourse 53, commentary on the two greatest commandments (to love God and to love one's neighbour).

† "Take up the cross, and follow me": See also commentary on other verses in which Jesus gives this instruction, in Discourses 41, 45, 46, and 58.

with his outer abundance, it is difficult for him to advance toward the kingdom of God.

"It is extremely hard for those who are engrossed in material comforts and pleasure to picture the superior, everlasting happiness to be found in Cosmic Consciousness! It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a man, corpulent and humped like a camel with his accumulation of material attachments, to pass through the subtle gate of meditation that leads to Cosmic Consciousness. Habits of coarse physical pleasure, well adapted to the gross material body, do not readily yield to the cultivation of the divine habit of meditation with its surpassingly fine soul joy.

"Though the restlessness and bad habits of materially minded persons make it impossible for them to enter into the kingdom of God, still, if they pray earnestly, persistently for God's help, those obstacles can be removed with the aid of His blessings. What is impossible for man to attain by himself can be accomplished by attunement with God's grace and almighty power."

Jesus, whose consciousness was absorbed in God's love existing within himself and everywhere, perceived all that is praiseworthy as a manifestation of the Heavenly Father; and thus he would not credit the good in himself apart from its oneness with God. There was no intrusion of egotistical separation between his Self and Spirit.

Universality of rules of conduct taught by Moses, Jesus, and India's science of yoga

Divine laws bequeathed to humanity as the foundation principles of all true religions—such as the Ten Commandments conveyed by Moses and cited in part here by Jesus, or the *yama-niyama* principles enumerated by Patanjali in the *Yoga Sutras*—are not arbitrary edicts of a Cosmic Autocrat. They are given to enable man to live in this world of cosmic delusion and satanic temptation as God's child, manifesting His image of divine qualities, rather than being helplessly identified with the flesh and its capricious senses, which are subject to delusive evil. The rules of conduct stressed by Jesus so closely parallel the moral laws prescribed more anciently by India's yogis because they are expressions of eternal universal principles—*rita*, the divine order that upholds the cosmos and defines man's bounden duty in participating in its governance.

The examples of actions from which one is to abstain evoked by Jesus in these present verses have an exact or implicit correspondence

with the five injunctions of the first step of Patanjali's eightfold path of Yoga, codified as *yama,* restraint, the thou-shalt-nots.*

"Do not kill"; "Thou shalt do no murder"—Patanjali's *ahimsa,* "harmlessness, noninjury." In the Indian epic *Mahabharata, ahimsa* is defined as "virtue entire" (*sakalo dharma*). It is behaviour governed by the recognition of the One Life omnipresent in all beings. It is the inspiration to be helpful and serviceful to others, without which one is tacitly, in some way, doing harm to them by such omission. Murder is highlighted as a heinous form of injury, a mortal offence to the Indwelling Spirit. Murder is committed through identification with greed, selfishness, anger—all of which are satanic qualities and destroy the consciousness of soul peace. To kill is to perpetuate the evil example of killing, inviting wrath and impulses of murderous revenge from the relatives and friends of the victim and the aggregate social conscience. To kill is to destroy the God-created temple of life belonging to the soul. A life cut short deprives man of the karmic learning experiences by which the soul can expand its influence and spiritualize the temple of life to find God therein. It is a cruelty that inflicts great suffering on a brother soul. Such cruelty to others creates an alienation between the perpetrator and God.

"Thou shalt not commit adultery" is elevated by Patanjali to its purest connotation as *brahmacharya,* "continence, self-restraint." Promiscuous behaviour, in or out of wedlock, is abuse of Nature's sacred creative force, limiting the consciousness to identification with the physical body with loss of the consciousness of the soul's transcendent omnipresence.

"Thou shalt not steal" is closely allied to another of the Ten Commandments, "Thou shalt not covet...anything that is thy neighbour's." Corresponding to these are Patanjali's proscriptions of *asteya,* referring to any form of misappropriation; and *aparigraha,* "noncovetousness"—absence of greed and possessiveness. Far from enriching one's life, acquisitions obtained through stealing and greed develop an extreme impoverishment of selfishness and loss of the consciousness of all-possession that comes from the inner assurance of divine contact. Misbegotten, covetous acquisitions, be they of money, property, reputation, friends, or someone else's husband or wife, inflicts misery on

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* See also reference to *niyama,* the prescriptive practices necessary to the spiritual life linked by Patanjali to the proscriptive practices of *yama* (Discourse 61).

others; one who causes grief to another excludes himself from the ever joyous aura of God's presence.

"Thou shalt not bear false witness," and "Defraud not" (added in the account of Mark), are tantamount to Patanjali's *satya*, "truthfulness," avoidance of falsehood in all of its aspects. Bearing false witness develops spiritual blindness with loss of intuitive perception of truth. Defrauding develops mental insincerity, which obtrudes itself as a veil between human consciousness and divine consciousness. Fact may bear little relationship to truth. Truth is exact correspondence with reality, unconditioned by the imposition of man's attenuating suppositions or rationalized motives. To know truth, man must begin by purifying his discrimination, purging himself of deviousness and egoistic rationalizations and schemes.

"Honour thy father and thy mother" and "Love thy neighbour as thyself" are umbrellaed under the realization that recognises the One who has become the many. "With a vision of equality for all things, the yogi beholds his Self (Spirit-united) in all creatures and all creatures in the Spirit....The best type of yogi is he who feels for others, whether in grief or pleasure, even as he feels for himself."*

One who honours father and mother honours in them the presence of the Divine Father-Mother, who protects and nurtures the child by manifesting as reason and feeling in the physical forms of the human parents. Expansion of love beyond the confines of self-centredness begins with family—the role of parents provides the initial instinctive introduction to reaching outside of oneself.

One who can then love his neighbours—human beings, birds, animals, flowers, every living thing existing in the neighbourhood of the Self, his soul—as expressions of God feels the Divine Presence in them all. To love these expressions of the One Life as one loves the Self is to know the presence of the Infinite Self, the Spirit, as all-pervasive. He whose love contracts in divisive self-interest shuts out of his consciousness the universal consciousness of God. He whose mind is prepared to love his fellow beings as he loves himself experiences the joy of feeling his little self expanding in the omnipresence of God.

Though scriptural commandments are the irreducible beginning point of a lastingly happy life, outward moral and religious observances in themselves afford man only a very slow means of elevating

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* *God Talks With Arjuna: The Bhagavad Gita* VI:29, 32.

human consciousness to divine consciousness. That is why yoga, the complete science of purifying the inner consciousness for God-awareness, specifies the further practices of *asana* (bodily discipline), *pranayama* (control of life energy), and *pratyahara* (interiorization) for achieving actual contact of God in the meditative states of *dharana, dhyana,* and *samadhi.** Like the rich young man who approached Jesus for guidance in attaining everlasting life, many followers of exoteric religion progress no further than the proscriptive and prescriptive commandments. Religious efforts that encompass these rudiments may produce a measure of inner peace and good karma, and are doubtless far better for a person than flouting the do's and don'ts altogether. But full awakening of man's divine consciousness requires a deeper discipline for refining and spiritualizing the soul's body-mind vehicle with its karmic accumulation of psychological and emotional tendencies, habits, and desires.†

Yoga begins with moral rules, and gives the further practices needed for God-realization

Jesus analysed the young man who had obeyed the commandments yet lacked God-consciousness: he was in bondage to materialistic attachments. Jesus councelled him, succinctly and candidly: "Sell whatever thou hast" and "take up the cross"—adopt the liberating attitude of inner renunciation and those methods of self-discipline and meditation that free the mind from bondage to body and possessions; "and follow me"—follow the path my consciousness has taken through the door of the spiritual eye into Christ Consciousness, that you may join me in God's kingdom of everlasting life and bliss.

"Take up the cross": the practice of inner renunciation, self-discipline, and nonattachment

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* Indeed, it is the higher disciplines of yoga that make possible for the average person an effective and lasting practise of moral observances, not by outer suppression of harmful impulses but by inner transmutation. See Discourse 48, yogic explanation of Jesus' moral admonitions in Matthew 18:8–9: "If thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off....And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee."

† "Free from ever-hoping desires and from cravings for possessions, with the heart (waves of feeling) controlled by the soul (by yoga concentration), retiring alone to a quiet place, the yogi should constantly try to unite with the soul....

"Established on that seat, concentrating the mind on one point, and controlling the activities of the fanciful faculty (*chitta,* feeling—the power that visualizes) and the senses, let him practice yoga for self-purification" (*God Talks With Arjuna: The Bhagavad Gita* VI:10, 12).

Though he was morally upright, the young man's attachment to his earthly treasures precluded acceptance of Jesus' admonition: "He was sad at this saying, and went away grieved." Jesus then explained to his disciples: "Those who are satisfied with temporal pleasures feel no inclination to seek the subtle everlasting happiness of God-consciousness."* He pointed out that materially minded rich persons who identify their souls with idle habits of indulgences find their wonted ways obstructing the cultivation of spiritual habits. Even as a camel cannot go through the eye of a needle, so "spoiled aristocrats" inured to restlessness-producing luxuries and extravagances are unmotivated, and find it difficult, if not impossible, to quiet the mind and focus it within for God-contact in meditative calmness.† The more hedonistic one's habits are, the less sensitive one is to God-consciousness; the more one develops God-consciousness, the fewer materialistic habits remain.

Attachment to wealth consists of not being able to live simply and contentedly without the luxurious surroundings and accoutrements that cater to self-indulgent desires and pleasures. However, merely because one lives in a palatial residence among material comforts does not necessarily imply dependence on them. It is not the possessions of a rich man that destroy his God-consciousness, but his mental enslavement of being possessed by his possessions. Jesus condemned the material habits of the rich man and not his wealth per se, for there are persons who have been blessed with prosperity who serve as examples of true seekers of God-consciousness, and who with Christlike compassion help to relieve the miseries of others. They utilize their good fortune in the right way.

Jesus used the term "rich man" to indicate a person who is deluded with an inflated sense of possession when in reality he is but a debtor, a recipient of a temporary loan from God's cosmic treasury. It is when a person of wealth becomes so intoxicated with his temporal power that he forgets to acquire the imperishable riches of divine attainment that he is to be censured. Pride of possession, as well as the presumption of security it produces, is foolish, as even the most mightily endowed discover when all is taken away by death, if not sooner.

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* See also Discourse 33, commentary on Luke 6:24: "But woe unto you that are rich! for ye have received your consolation."

† See also Discourses 29 and 59, commentary on Matthew 6:24 and Luke 16:13: "Ye cannot serve God and mammon."

He is truly rich who owns everlastingly the full realization of his soul qualities of immortality, divine bliss, omniscience, and omnipresence. Jesus points out that man should free himself from shortsighted attachment to materiality by cultivating the remembrance of his divine endowment as a child of God, which makes him able easily and naturally to renounce the consciousness of temporal positions and possessions to reclaim the eternal kingdom of Cosmic Consciousness.

A close observation of the habits of most materially enhanced persons makes it easy to understand why Jesus spoke as he did. Too often they are perpetually busy thinking of money and acquisitions, no matter how much they have, and devising new avenues of physical enjoyment. It is next to impossible to concentrate on God in meditation and prayer when excitement-addicted thoughts constantly waver and flit toward the numerous allurements available to them.

Yet Jesus also gives assurance that regardless of what is seemingly impossible, "with God all things are possible." Materially minded persons—those who possess little as well as those who possess much—whose bad habits and slavish engrossment in worldly temptations make them despair of ever finding God must remember: With the help of Him who is almighty, they can and will pass through the gate to the divine kingdom—provided they seek that help through repentance and perseverance in meditation. The bestowal of salvation is fifty percent the grace of God, never withheld when the devotee has done his utmost.

Then answered Peter and said unto him, "Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee: what shall we have therefore?"

And Jesus said unto them, "Verily I say unto you, that ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life. But many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first" (Matthew 19:27–30).

Parallel references:

> *"Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations. And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Luke 22:28–30).*

* * *

> *Then Peter began to say unto him, "Lo, we have left all, and have followed thee."*
>
> *And Jesus answered and said, "Verily I say unto you, there is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, but he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life. But many that are first shall be last; and the last first" (Mark 10:28–31).**

The reward of renunciation and self-denial for the purpose of attaining Cosmic Consciousness

66 With the conviction of the realization of truth I say unto you that you who have followed me, who have attained my Christ Consciousness by deep prayer and meditation, shall find after the resurrection of the Son of man (the spiritualization of my physical body into cosmic Spirit) that my Christ Consciousness, having been glorified on earth by ecstasy, will rest on the throne of omnipresent Cosmic Consciousness. Your souls shall also rest on a throne of Cosmic Consciousness. You will be liberated at twelve different times according to the span required for working out all seeds of actions of your past lives. (Liberation for Judas will come only after numerous incarnations because of his betrayal of the Son of man.)

"When your souls become one with Christ Consciousness and are fully liberated into Cosmic Consciousness, in your omnipresence you will see the destiny of the souls of the twelve tribes of Israel, all

* Cf. additional parallel reference in Luke 18:28–30.

generations of the various races of human beings, during their human existence and in the after-death state, and how they are judged in the astral world according to their actions of earthly life, ultimately attaining liberation in God or repeatedly reincarnating on earth to work further for their spiritual freedom.

"Even as I am one with the Christ Consciousness that is God's reflected intelligence effecting and witnessing all creation, so you, my disciples, shall be as apostles of the Christ Consciousness, witnessing the ingress and egress of souls between the vibrationless Infinity of God the Father and the sphere of manifested creation.*

"Through your divine vision, you shall see that according to the law of cause and effect, everyone who has sincerely forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake—having loosened the bonds of attachment by mergence of the consciousness in the spiritualizing vibration of the Holy Ghost and the Christ Consciousness within it—shall receive a hundredfold, even in this earthly life. They shall be blessed with spiritual comforts, divine relations, spiritual-son disciples, divine friends —along with persecutions by the cosmic satanic delusion, which will try to shake their resolution and faith in God. Those who are successful in renouncing everything—possessions, sense pleasures, human attachment—to attain God-consciousness will regain realization of the eternal life that has so long been hidden in their souls.†

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* Analogously symbolic references to the apostles in heaven and the twelve tribes of Israel are found in Revelation 21:10–12, 14: "And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain (transcendent state of consciousness), and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal (the universal creative light descending into astral manifestation from the infinity of God's unmanifested Bliss); and had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel (the vibratory 'wall' or rampart circumventing and separating the astral heaven of manifestation from the Unmanifested Absolute, with portals, 'gates,' through which God sends souls into creation and ultimately draws them back into His Being)....And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. (As the consciousness of Jesus was absorbed into Christ Consciousness, so his twelve disciples, when completely liberated, would also be one with the Christ Consciousness enthroned on these foundations, i.e., ensconced in the wondrous realization of the awesome informing of the Formless Absolute.)"

† See also Discourses 40, 41, and 49 for further commentary on Jesus' ideals of inner and outer renunciation.

"However, some who have begun the spiritual path first may nevertheless be the last to attain liberation—their slower progress being the result of their present degree of realization and karmic burden, and a lack of spiritual intensity and tenacity. Those devotees who have come later to the path but who follow it with greater zeal, may be first to enter into Cosmic Consciousness and eternal freedom. In any case, those whose spiritual enthusiasm and love for God last to the end of life will be among 'the first' to enter liberation in God's kingdom."*

Jesus gives assurance that renunciation of material possessions, self-denial, and acceptance of persecution in order to attain Cosmic Consciousness are not in vain. Those who forsake mundane life to devote themselves wholeheartedly to the spiritual life will find everything—God as well as the necessities of material life.† The end of renunciation is not a negative existence or a misery resulting from self-torture, but the positive attainment of the Eternal Treasure. However, Jesus warns that all renunciants, even though rewarded on earth and in heaven, must be prepared to meet persecutions and temptations of the flesh due to the power of cosmic delusion, which tries relentlessly to block the progress of seekers. But once they conquer mortal seductions, they will attain the joys of unbroken, eternal, ever new happiness in the bosom of Cosmic Consciousness.

Jesus clearly acknowledges that those to whom he was speaking were the faithful ones—having continued to follow him through tribulations and trials generated by the temptations and tests of satanic delusion—and that he was preparing to receive them in the kingdom of Christ Consciousness, even as his Father had previously ordained that he be received. There, he promises, they would commune ("eat") and be permeated with Divine Bliss ("drink"), for they would be on his plane of existence ("at my table in my kingdom") enthroned in Cosmic Consciousness in the kingdom of Christ Consciousness. Each would sit on the throne of his own divine perception and be able to behold the resplendent workings of God's manifesting power sending

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* See also Discourse 57, commentary on Luke 13:30, in which Jesus repeats this saying about "the last shall be first."

† Jesus also pointed out the futility of mere outward renunciation if unaccompanied by intense inner discipline, as illustrated in the next two parables in this Discourse—the parable of the labourers in the vineyard and the parable of the ten pounds.

forth universes and souls governed by the evolutionary operation of the law of cause and effect; they would comprehend the karmic judgment as applied to the descendants of the twelve tribes of Israel, symbolically the various races of humanity.

"For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which went out early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard. And when he had agreed with the labourers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard.

"And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing idle in the marketplace. And he said unto them: 'Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right I will give you.' And they went their way. Again he went out about the sixth and ninth hour, and did likewise.

"And about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing idle, and saith unto them, 'Why stand ye here all the day idle?' They say unto him, 'Because no man hath hired us.' He saith unto them, 'Go ye also into the vineyard; and whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive.'

"So when even was come, the lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, 'Call the labourers, and give them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first.' And when they came that were hired about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny. But when the first came, they supposed that they should have received more; and they likewise received every man a penny.

"And when they had received it, they murmured against the goodman of the house, saying, 'These last have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal to us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day.'

"But he answered one of them, and said, 'Friend, I do thee no wrong: didst not thou agree with me for a penny? Take that thine is, and go thy way: I will give unto this last, even as unto thee. Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good?'

"So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen" (Matthew 20:1–16).

66 For the kingdom of God is known by a master who comes on earth and, like a divine householder, calls people from the material world to labour spiritually in the vineyard of superconscious meditation and self-discipline, thus earning the wages of liberating wisdom.

"The last shall be first": spiritual meaning of the parable of the labourers in the vineyard

"The master called truth-seekers who stood idle, having renounced attachment to material possessions to serve their greater desire for God but were yet lacking fulfilment. He told them, 'Come, in the first morning of my appearance on earth I invite you to work in my vineyard of self-discipline, and I will give you wisdom for your labour.'

"And the master went out in the third hour and saw more truth-seekers and would-be renunciants standing inactive in the marketplace of material activity, unable to find God and the right guru to lead them on the divine path. So the master spoke to them, 'Go into the vineyard of my discipline, and whatever wisdom is rightfully your due according to your spiritual labours shall be given unto you'; and those truth-seekers followed him.

"Again the master went out for the sixth and the ninth times and gathered more disciples who were willing to work in the vineyard of self-discipline to receive the wages of wisdom. Long after, the master went out for the eleventh time and found yet more inactive renunciants; they, too, lacked a spiritual preceptor to guide them. He asked them to work in his vineyard of discipline and assured them that they would receive wisdom according to the intensity of their work.

"Then the master of the vineyard called the steward—the cosmic law of cause and effect—and commanded that the spiritual labourers from the last to the first be given their wages of liberating wisdom. Owing to their spiritual intensity, the disciples who came last received the same divine illumination as those who first joined the master. But those who had come first reasoned that they should have received more and voiced their feelings: 'O good master of the household of God, we expected to be given more of your store of wisdom, for we have been with you longer and have borne longer the heat of trials and self-discipline than those who came last. How is it that you have given equally to the latecomers and to the earliest spiritual labourers?'

"The master answered, 'All truth-seekers, being the divine children of God, are given the same liberating wisdom whether they come

first or last—provided their spiritual enthusiasm is intense. Go your way in peace and be satisfied with what you have received, even though you had to labour longer for it. According to the wish of the Heavenly Father, it is lawful for me to open the way to divine attainment for all who have an ardent hunger for spirituality; whether they come first or last they equally deserve to receive the same liberating realization. Because God's wisdom flows through me, I intuit His perfect justice, which actuates my impartiality. Therefore, the last to enter the spiritual path may, through intensity, become the first to receive wisdom; and the first, if besotted with halfhearted enthusiasm, may be the last to receive emancipation.'

"That is why many may be called to a master because of their spiritual desire, but few are chosen to receive liberation in Cosmic Consciousness unless and until they fulfil the requisite of intensity in their superconscious meditations and earnest practice of spiritual discipline. Every devotee has equal, impartial opportunity; each determines when he shall be among those 'chosen.'"

Jesus wanted to convey to all truth-seekers that it does not matter whether a spiritual aspirant enters the divine path early or late in life, or attains Cosmic Consciousness within a short time or in a protracted period of effort; for, in the final attainment, all are glorified in the same infinite wisdom, ever new bliss, and immortality in God.

And Jesus going up to Jerusalem took the twelve disciples apart in the way, and said unto them, "Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify him: and the third day he shall rise again" (Matthew 20:17–19).

Parallel reference:

Then he took unto him the twelve, and said unto them, "Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished. For he shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and

spitefully entreated, and spitted on: And they shall scourge him, and put him to death: and the third day he shall rise again."

*And they understood none of these things: and this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken (Luke 18:31–34).**

Jesus predicts to his disciples how the karmic law would mandate his crucifixion

"Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all predictions that have been made by the prophets concerning my physical body—in which the Christ Consciousness is encased—will come to pass. My physical body shall be delivered by treachery into the hands of the chief priests and the scribes. They shall condemn it to death; and they shall deliver it to the Gentiles who shall mock my presence, scourge my physical body, spit on it, and ultimately crucify it. But on the third day, after freeing my spirit from the threefold karmic imperatives that held it incarnate in its physical, astral, and causal bodies, my physical body will be spiritualized by divine energy and resurrected."

Jesus mentions for the first time to his disciples the predictions of earlier prophets about his future life. For centuries, God-knowing prophets of Israel had intimated Jesus' life and mission as a messiah or saviour of his people, and had foretold that he would be put to death as recompense for the sins of many.†

The prophets could foresee the mass karmic evolution of the future, unto the advent of the incarnation of Jesus. The circumstances of that future era, and the effect it would have on the coeval timely appearance of a messiah with a message of liberation into the kingdom of God, formed a pattern of eventuality that could be clearly read by the prophets and keenly known by the intuitive Christ-perception of Jesus.

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* Cf. additional parallel reference in Mark 10:32–34.

† For example, Isaiah 53:3–8: "He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief....He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed....He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken."

See also Discourse 10, commentary on John 1:44–51; and Discourse 22, commentary on Matthew 4:12–17.

Jesus himself had prophesied: "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up."* To any master who is one with God, the law of cause and effect that applies to his body of a particular life can be seen very clearly. Sometimes the masters speak of it to others; sometimes they do not. Jesus had been liberated long before his advent in that incarnation; he came as a special messenger of the Heavenly Father and to give demonstrative evidence of an exemplary life on earth. As his mission was ofttimes contrary to the political and socioreligious laws and traditions of his times, Jesus saw how the karmic law of action and its effects would mandate his crucifixion; he also foresaw his God-ordained glorious resurrection. Thus the Father permitted him to reveal these events to his disciples. Though the import of his words "was hid from them" at the time, their truth would echo as the foretold events were made manifest.

It is significant that Jesus did not say "the Son of God shall be delivered." "Son of man" referred to his human body; his God-united Christ consciousness ("Son of God"), being immortal and invulnerable, was subject to no such iniquity.

And Jesus entered and passed through Jericho. And, behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus, which was the chief among the publicans, and he was rich. And he sought to see Jesus who he was; and could not for the press, because he was little of stature. And he ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him: for he was to pass that way.

And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, "Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for today I must abide at thy house."

And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully. And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying, that he was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner.

And Zacchaeus stood, and said unto the Lord: "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold."

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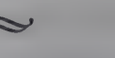
* John 2:18–22 (see commentary in Discourse 12).

And Jesus said unto him, "This day is salvation come to this house, forsomuch as he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:1–10).

As Jesus passed through the crowds in Jericho, he telepathically felt the eager soul-call of Zacchaeus striking a responsive chord in his heart. This seemingly unlikely but fortuitous encounter illustrates Jesus' former statement: "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him."* Even as Zacchaeus was anxious to meet Jesus, so the Christ Consciousness in Jesus was responding to this pure-hearted seeker in fulfilment of the inward promptings of the Heavenly Father: "Zacchaeus, I recognise your thoughts about me. Now make haste in coming down from the tree, for it is the wish of the Father that I come to your home."

Jesus plainly declared to Zacchaeus, "This day salvation is come to this house....for the Son of man has come to seek and to save that which was lost." He signified that Zacchaeus and his family members were worthy descendents of Abraham, devoted children of God, who through some delusion had been lost in the deserts of incarnations; and that now, through divine decree, he had been sent as their God-chosen guru-saviour to deliver them from further blind wanderings to spiritual emancipation.



And as they heard these things, he added and spake a parable, because he was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear.

He said therefore, "A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds,† and said unto them, 'Occupy till I come.' But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, 'We will not have this man to reign over us.'

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* John 6:44 (see Discourse 43).

† "Ten pounds": The Greek term *mina* was translated as British pound in the King James Bible. A *mina* was approximately three months' wages for a labourer of that time.

"And it came to pass, that when he was returned, having received the kingdom, then he commanded these servants to be called unto him, to whom he had given the money, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading. Then came the first, saying, 'Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds.' And he said unto him, 'Well, thou good servant: because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities.' And the second came, saying, 'Lord, thy pound hath gained five pounds.' And he said likewise to him, 'Be thou also over five cities.'

"And another came, saying, 'Lord, behold, here is thy pound, which I have kept laid up in a napkin: For I feared thee, because thou art an austere man: thou takest up that thou layedst not down, and reapest that thou didst not sow.' And he saith unto him, 'Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant. Thou knewest that I was an austere man, taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not sow: Wherefore then gavest not thou my money into the bank, that at my coming I might have required mine own with usury?'

"And he said unto them that stood by, 'Take from him the pound, and give it to him that hath ten pounds.' (And they said unto him, 'Lord, he hath ten pounds.') 'For I say unto you, that unto every one which hath shall be given; and from him that hath not, even that he hath shall be taken away from him. But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me.'" *

And when he had thus spoken, he went before, ascending up to Jerusalem (Luke 19:11–28).

This parable was to disabuse the people of the false notion that the kingdom of God of which Jesus spoke would be established by him as a sovereign realm on earth. Jesus admonished that God's kingdom would be built within themselves by their realizing their soul potentials through the proper use of the spiritual endowment he had given to them in his teachings. Soon he would be absent from them in body, working elsewhere for the liberation of souls; but when in Christ Consciousness he "returned" in Spirit, he would judge their endeavours.

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* Cf. Matthew 25:14–30 for a similar telling of this parable.

Some would wisely earn their spiritual rewards, others would by their sloth forfeit the grace that had been offered to them to advance in all-fulfilling Self-realization.

Parable of the ten pounds: proper use of the spiritual wealth in a master's teachings

The parable thus interpreted is as follows:

"A master, born on earth to redeem many souls, had ten devotees in his hermitage. He summoned them one day to say that he was going to preach his message to another group, a materialistic people who lived in delusion, far from truth. The master declared that after he had established his soul teachings in that distant kingdom, he would return to the hermitage. He instructed his disciples to follow strictly the moral and spiritual precepts and commandments, and to keep their consciousness engaged with the holy vibrations of peace permeating the hermitage. With a wealth of blessings, symbolized by a parting gesture of the ten pounds, he left. He knew his disciples would meet with many temptations during his absence, because the worldly people of the city in which the master had his hermitage were scornful of his ideals. They even sent to the master after his departure a message of derision, hoping he would not return.

"But after some time, he appeared again at the hermitage and examined the state of spiritual health of his disciples. He found one of them to be far advanced, tenfold. The master said: 'Thou hast been a good disciple, improving thyself and others. Because of thy faithfulness to truth and discipline, thou wilt become master over ten spheres of divine powers.'

"The master observed that another disciple had also grown in spiritual stature, fivefold. In praise, the master said, 'Thou wilt come into possession of five spiritual powers.'

"The master was grieved to note that another disciple had made no spiritual progress. As an excuse, the disciple said: 'I have not forgotten your disciplines and technique of meditation which you left with me, but I have kept them unused, secure within myself. I was afraid I could never be austere and strict like yourself. I thought I could not aspire to reach your high state of spiritual eminence in which, without observing the human law of cause and effect—endeavour for rewards—you are able to acquire everything by your will power.'

"The master was displeased and said: 'I will judge you by your own words. You know in your heart that it was by great austerities that I have attained this state of transcendence above the ordinary

laws of nature. My methods of discipline, though difficult, would have brought you great results if you had followed them as I instructed you. Even if you had mechanically practised them, they would have circulated deep into the bank of your subconscious mind and would thus have yielded you—and consequently me, as your teacher and well-wisher—an increase in spiritual experience.'

"The master then said to the assembled group: 'Behold this disobedient disciple; because of his mental folly, he did not stimulate his spiritual desire by my methods of discipline. Therefore, what little spirituality he ever had is going away from him, due to the enlarging strength of bad habits. On the other hand, my beloved disciple who has broadened tenfold his spiritual capacity will receive from me the additional spiritual wealth I would otherwise have been able to bestow on this erring one, for whom I can now do nothing. For I say unto you: Every disciple of truth who has acquired spiritual habits by deep meditation and self-discipline shall attract unto himself more and more spirituality; but the disciple who is irregular and neglectful shall lose what little spiritual power he starts with; it will wither away through lack of nurturing.'"

Jesus illustrates in this parable the great force of habit. A person who possesses good habits, and practises those habits in his life, will attract unto himself even more goodness; while a person who has a latent tendency toward virtue, and does not encourage it by daily acts of goodness, will find in time that he loses that inner incentive to become good. Similarly, if a person has evil habits, he will create an exclusive taste for the temporary pleasures of sense-attachment; and the more he indulges his sensuous tastes, the more his evil habit will grow upon him. With the increase of evil habits, he will attract abundant evil experiences unto himself. But if a person has an evil tendency and does not care to feed that inclination with further acts of the temporary pleasures of evil, then he will find in time that his evil tendency has disappeared.*

The immense power of good and bad habits to elevate or degrade one's life

While stressing the spiritual application of the attracting power of habit, Jesus used in metaphor one of man's most common longings—the desire for financial security. Whether one is seeking God, the

* See also Discourse 37, commentary on Matthew 13:12 in which Jesus repeats this saying.

betterment of oneself, or the abundance of material prosperity, the following analysis will illustrate the paramount importance and influence of the law of habit:

A wealthy person, having made habitual those actions that bring financial success, will attract, by fresh acts of creative ability, more riches unto himself. But a person with a latent conviction that he could be financially successful, and who has a little money but who cares not to buttress his optimistic outlook by daily acts of creative financial effort, will lose even the little financial means he has as well as his inner conviction that he can succeed.

Jesus' words do not mean that only those who have riches will grow richer and that the poor will become ever more destitute. The law of karma governs all departments of life. A person who (owing to past good karma) is born wealthy, and has the tendency and inborn conviction of prosperity, will attract more riches in this incarnation because of two reasons: (1) his prenatal habits of financial success stimulating his will to succeed, (2) his exercise of free will and determination in further success-producing actions in this life.

Many people who are very creative and are determined to succeed financially nevertheless do not do so because in this life their financial-failure karma of past incarnations has placed them in circumstances not conducive to prosperity. Some are born in this life with a powerful determination to succeed financially *because* of failure in their previous life. Such persons achieve prosperity after a long struggle, during which their latent prenatal habits of financial failure and past poverty-karma are overcome. Therefore, a person who is poor in spite of many attempts to succeed must continuously make greater efforts for financial success, so that he can overcome the influences of a latent poverty consciousness carried from a prenatal existence.

This same principle is to be applied by all spiritual seekers of the kingdom of God. If a person meditates regularly and consistently and still does not attain Self-realization, he should realize that—owing to past karma of failure to create and sustain successful habits of meditating in past lives—his determination to succeed in meditation has to be newly created in this life, perhaps stimulated only when he encounters some misery. Therefore, instead of giving up the practice as impossible, he should apply himself to deeper and deeper endeavour until the meditation habit is firmly established and begins to bestow the joyous experiences of Self-realization. These will create in him even

stronger habits of meditation, which in turn will attract abundant ever new bliss of God-contact.

The reward of ten cities, or five cities, mentioned in the parable, refers symbolically to the powers that develop in the devotee who strictly follows God-given spiritual commandments. To receive the hidden blessings of these commandments—whether scriptural, such as the Ten Commandments or Patanjali's *yama-niyama;* or injunctions of *sadhana,* the spiritual discipline outlined by one's guru—they must be adhered to not only as nominal observances of abstention or application, as the case may be, but wholly integrated into one's being so as to be realized in their fullest intent as a veritable part of one's self. With each virtue that is mastered, as with every step of ascension the consciousness achieves, there is bestowed on the devotee a corresponding power or stage of enlightenment—revelations of the soul's innate omnipotence and omniscience.

The spiritual powers or stage of enlightenment conferred by mastery of each commandment

Thus, for example, referring to the commandments cited by Jesus in the earlier story of the rich man [in the opening verses of this Discourse]:

By destroying the instinct or impulse to kill, one gains a divine magnetism by which he secures the confidence of man and even beasts and birds. Saint Francis of Assisi was one such exemplar, as are great yogi-ascetics who live in secluded haunts in perfect harmony with otherwise fearsome cobras and tigers.

One who physically and mentally overcomes all sex temptations becomes filled with divine bliss and constant spiritual enthusiasm impregnated with tremendous transmuted life energy that imbues him with the magnetism of self-mastery.

One who has banished from his mind and actions all desire to steal (to misappropriate anything not rightfully his), or to possess wealth by any unscrupulous or selfish means, will by his freedom from material bondage attract to himself whatever he needs in life.

One who has removed all impulse to misrepresent or distort truth, never bearing false witness in any circumstance for any personal motive or advantage, establishes within himself a great power whereby his words always come true.

He who is never duplicitous and deals justly in mind and deed with everyone acquires a discernment and a divine simplicity and insight into all human nature. Such a one, having completely conquered

the desire to defraud, or to conceal or manipulate facts or events for his own advantage, cannot be deluded by any human being nor even by *maya*, the cosmic delusion employed by the Prince of Liars.

He who honours his father and mother finds in all parents the protecting incarnation of God; he has taken a first step toward universal consciousness. Any person who loves his family, his country, all nations, birds, beasts, and all living creatures, as neighbours or equal sharers of the world, develops the consciousness of omnipresence and omniscience.

Devotees who have mastered the moral precepts, or commandments, and who successfully meditate on God in fulfilment of the supreme commandment to love God with heart, mind, soul, and strength, find themselves possessors of all spiritual powers.

In the parable, the master or "nobleman," speaking of "mine enemies" in his closing words, referred to worldly people who were loath, inimical, to the cultivation in themselves of Christ Consciousness by meditation and self-discipline. "Slay them" does not mean physical death, but the destruction of spiritual perceptions from lack of soul sight. Those who refuse to cultivate their true soul nature will surely find their spiritual life annihilated. "Before me" refers to the Cosmic Consciousness of a master, who can behold all spiritually rebellious people as ready to be slain by delusion.

DISCOURSE 64

The Triumphal Entry Into Jerusalem

The Relative Priority of Fulfilling One's Spiritual Duties to God and to Humanity

❖

The Beautiful Spiritual Symbolism in Jesus' Entry Into Jerusalem

❖

Peace Draws Its Strength and Support From the Universal Order of God's Creation

❖

Jesus' Withering of the Fig Tree: A Glimpse of His Contrasting Human and Divine Natures

"The Prince of Peace, whose only battle cry could be: Victory to the Meek! rode no fiery charger amidst a panoplied army....[He] demonstrated once again that a son of God celebrates his dominion in meekness and lowliness of pride."

And being in Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he sat at meat, there came a woman having an alabaster box of ointment of spikenard very precious; and she brake the box, and poured it on his head. And there were some that had indignation within themselves, and said, "Why was this waste of the ointment made? For it might have been sold for more than three hundred pence, and have been given to the poor." And they murmured against her.

And Jesus said, "Let her alone; why trouble ye her? She hath wrought a good work on me. For ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will ye may do them good: but me ye have not always. She hath done what she could: she is come aforehand to anoint my body to the burying. Verily I say unto you, wheresoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her."

And Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve, went unto the chief priests, to betray him unto them. And when they heard it, they were glad, and promised to give him money. And he sought how he might conveniently betray him.

—Mark 14:3–11

And when they drew nigh unto Jerusalem, and were come to Bethphage, unto the mount of Olives, then sent Jesus two disciples, saying unto them, "Go into the village over against you, and straightway ye shall find an ass tied, and a colt with her: loose them, and bring them unto me. And if any man say ought unto you, ye shall say, 'The Lord hath need of them'; and straightway he will send them."

All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, "Tell ye the daughter of Sion, 'Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass.'"

And the disciples went, and did as Jesus commanded them, and brought the ass, and the colt, and put on them their clothes, and they set him thereon. And a very great mul-

titude spread their garments in the way; others cut down branches from the trees, and strewed them in the way. And the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, "Hosanna to the son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest."

And when he was come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, "Who is this?" And the multitude said, "This is Jesus the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee."

And Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves, and said unto them, "It is written, 'My house shall be called the house of prayer'; but ye have made it 'a den of thieves.'"

And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple; and he healed them. And when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying in the temple, and saying, "Hosanna to the son of David"; they were sore displeased, and said unto him, "Hearest thou what these say?"

And Jesus saith unto them, "Yea; have ye never read, 'Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings Thou hast perfected praise'?" And he left them, and went out of the city into Bethany; and he lodged there.

Now in the morning as he returned into the city, he hungered. And when he saw a fig tree in the way, he came to it, and found nothing thereon, but leaves only, and said unto it, "Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever." And presently the fig tree withered away. And when the disciples saw it, they marvelled, saying, "How soon is the fig tree withered away!"

Jesus answered and said unto them, "Verily I say unto you, if ye have faith, and doubt not, ye shall not only do this which is done to the fig tree, but also if ye shall say unto this mountain, 'Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea'; it shall be done. And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive."

—Matthew 21:1–22

DISCOURSE 64

The Triumphal Entry Into Jerusalem

And being in Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he sat at meat, there came a woman having an alabaster box of ointment of spikenard very precious; and she brake the box, and poured it on his head. And there were some that had indignation within themselves, and said, "Why was this waste of the ointment made? For it might have been sold for more than three hundred pence, and have been given to the poor." And they murmured against her.*

And Jesus said, "Let her alone; why trouble ye her? She hath wrought a good work on me. For ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will ye may do them good: but me ye have not always. She hath done what she could: she is come aforehand to anoint my body to the burying. Verily I say unto you, wheresoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her."

And Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve, went unto the chief priests, to betray him unto them. And when they heard it, they were glad, and promised to give him money. And he sought how he might conveniently betray him (Mark 14:3–11).

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* The ointment, or at least its ingredients, most likely came from India. Spikenard is the root of *Nardostachys jatamansi*, of the Valerian family, which grew on the slopes of the Himalaya mountains. *Smith's Bible Dictionary* states that it "was annually brought from the mountains overhanging the Ganges and Jumna rivers down to the plains."

Parallel reference:

Then Jesus six days before the passover came to Bethany, where Lazarus was which had been dead, whom he raised from the dead. There they made him a supper; and Martha served: but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him.

Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment. Then saith one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, which should betray him, "Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor?" This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein.

Then said Jesus, "Let her alone: against the day of my burying hath she kept this. For the poor always ye have with you; but me ye have not always."

*Much people of the Jews therefore knew that he was there: and they came not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might see Lazarus also, whom he had raised from the dead. But the chief priests consulted that they might put Lazarus also to death; because that by reason of him many of the Jews went away, and believed on Jesus (John 12:1–11).**

Jesus bestowed his recognition of the woman's perpetual honour for one reason only—the sole reason that ruled his every action on earth. This was his instancy of acceptance that God alone can be the highest Goal of life. Good works for the poor, compassion for the suffering, can only complement, but never supplant, man's need for acknowledgment of dependence on his Creator.

The relative priority of fulfilling one's spiritual duties to God and to humanity

Saint John, in recording that this significant incident took place in the home of the resurrected Lazarus (rather than "in the house of Simon the leper" as stated in Matthew and Mark) identifies the woman who anointed Jesus as Mary, sister of Martha and Lazarus—she whose single-hearted devotion Jesus had commended earlier: "Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be

* Cf. additional parallel reference in Matthew 26:6–16.

taken away from her."* Because the woman had the spiritual discrimination to offer openly her homage to God—whose reflection she saw in Jesus—in preference to man, even the poor, Jesus gave her his praise as a discerning devotee whom the ages would finally acclaim.

Jesus, nonattached as he was to his body, had no desire for attention or honour, or for man's extravagances of adorning and perfuming a mere clod of clay. He was not extolling the personal devotion given him by Mary, but was commending her sagacity in worshipping the great God of the universe whose presence he consciously felt in his Christ Consciousness. He pointed out impartially Mary's wisdom in offering adoration to the holiest of all holy manifestations: the Christ Consciousness that was templed in him—the living reflection of the One Giver of all life, all consciousness, and all virtue, including charitable impulses to help the poor. Thus when Judas and others of materialistic attitude and hypocritical morality asserted that Mary would have done better had she sold the ointment and used the income to aid the poor, Jesus reminded them that they have a perpetual opportunity to attend to the poor, but they would not readily have another chance of showing devotion to a visible manifestation of God's presence in a bodily form; for such is a rare occurrence on earth.

Jesus' words emphasize that devotees should wisely grade their spiritual duties and righteous actions, keeping God as the first and supreme object of adoration. Mary with her instinctive divine devotion knew exactly what she was doing—that, first, it was her sacred privilege to honour the visible Christ in whom was the reflected manifestation of God; and, secondly, to serve God in others. She did not hesitate to anoint her Lord with the costly ointment, knowing that there is nothing in this world precious enough to show adequate reverence to the Supreme Beloved of all souls.

Jesus saw clearly how men's minds are open to every form of sidetracking, prone to any commandeering by a detail. There is only one problem in human life—establishment of unity with God—but this prime simplicity has been befogged by a million issues. Man will not give a monotheistic love to God, and disguises his infidelities by punctilious respect before outward shrines of charity. These humanitarian gestures are virtuous, since for a moment they divert man's attention

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* Luke 10:42 (see Discourse 53).

from himself, but they do not free him from his single responsibility in life—his sense of gratitude to God. This responsibility, assumed with man's first breath of an air freely bestowed by his only Benefactor, was discharged by the woman whom Jesus so powerfully upheld, silencing the thousand illogics that would put man before God.*

By his commendation of Mary, Jesus signified, as at countless other times, that God alone is worthy of all honour, not of outward ointments merely, but of every ego-sacrifice the love-filled hearts of devotees can devise as token of their joy in Him.

As Jesus well knew every scene to be unfolded in the divine drama of his life, he made two prophecies on the occasion of this repast at Bethany. His crucifixion was very nigh, since it was from this table that Judas went forth to bargain with priests for the price of his Master's life. That is why he declared of Mary, "She is come aforehand to anoint my body to the burying."

His second reference to the future, "wheresoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world," made clear that he was aware of the destined scope of his mission. Though his teachings were then known only to sections of a small Jewish province, they would ultimately spread in all lands.

And when they drew nigh unto Jerusalem, and were come to Bethphage, unto the mount of Olives, then sent Jesus two disciples, saying unto them, "Go into the village over against you, and straightway ye shall find an ass tied, and a colt with her: loose them, and bring them unto me. And if any man say ought unto you, ye shall say, 'The Lord hath need of them'; and straightway he will send them."

All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, "Tell ye the daughter of Sion, 'Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass.'"

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* Paramahansa Yogananda's commentary on the Bible verses covered in this Discourse was being prepared for publication in *Self-Realization* magazine during the period in which he was also working on *Autobiography of a Yogi*. Segments of the commentary, which may seem familiar to discerning readers, were adapted by him for inclusion in both works. ***(Publisher's Note)***

And the disciples went, and did as Jesus commanded them, and brought the ass, and the colt, and put on them their clothes, and they set him thereon. And a very great multitude spread their garments in the way; others cut down branches from the trees, and strewed them in the way. And the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, "Hosanna to the son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest."

And when he was come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, "Who is this?" And the multitude said, "This is Jesus the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee" (Matthew 21:1–11).

Parallel reference:

And it came to pass, when he was come nigh to Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount called the mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples, saying, "Go ye into the village over against you; in the which at your entering ye shall find a colt tied, whereon yet never man sat: loose him, and bring him hither. And if any man ask you, 'Why do you loose him?' thus shall ye say unto him, 'Because the Lord hath need of him.'"

And they that were sent went their way, and found even as he had said unto them. And as they were loosing the colt, the owners thereof said unto them, "Why loose ye the colt?" And they said, "The Lord hath need of him."

And they brought him to Jesus: and they cast their garments upon the colt, and they set Jesus thereon. And as he went, they spread their clothes in the way.

And when he was come nigh, even now at the descent of the mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen; saying, "Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord: peace in heaven, and glory in the highest."

And some of the Pharisees from among the multitude said unto him, "Master, rebuke thy disciples."

And he answered and said unto them, "I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out."

And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, "If thou hadst known, even thou, at last in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! But now they

*are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation" (Luke 19:29–44).**

Spiritually interpreted as relevant to man in every age, Jesus' triumphant entry into the city of Jerusalem inspires a beautiful symbology. Man's consciousness is that city of Jerusalem; his thoughts and feelings are the inhabitants. Jesus' coming into Jerusalem evokes the opening of the gates of man's devotion to receive the entrance of Christ Consciousness, in its omniscient power, into the bodily kingdom, with all its citizens rejoicing: "Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord: peace in heaven, and glory in the highest."

The beautiful spiritual symbolism in Jesus' entry into Jerusalem

The literal event, this striking day in Jesus' life, speaks once again of his cosmic Christ Consciousness in which nothing was outside his perception and command. With a few simple words, he directed two of his disciples to an exact distant location where they would find an as-yet unridden colt, and further empowered his messengers to procure the owner's permission to take the beast by offering nothing more than the ambiguous explanation: "Because the Lord hath need of him."

In every exigency of his life, Jesus proved that he had no need for the persuasion of gold; he ever found ready to his hand all material accessories to his plans.

The drama of this day in Jerusalem, as the disciples later came to realize,† was centred in its literal fulfilment of the Old Testament prophecy (Zechariah 9:9–10):

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having

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* Cf. additional parallel references in Mark 11:1–11 and John 12:12–19.

† See John 12:14–16: "And Jesus, when he had found a young ass, sat thereon; as it is written, 'Fear not, daughter of Sion: behold, thy King cometh, sitting on an ass's colt.' These things understood not his disciples at the first: but when Jesus was glorified, then remembered they that these things were written of him, and that they had done these things unto him."

> *salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass. And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle bow shall be cut off: and he shall speak peace unto the heathen: and his dominion shall be from sea even to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth.*

Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem was in very truth one in which the daughters and sons of Zion did "rejoice greatly" and "shout" as they beheld, and saluted by title, their King, "riding...upon a colt the foal of an ass," as Zechariah had anciently foretold.

That Christ would choose the lowly ass for his mount is as symbolic of his way of life as that he was born in a stable. Zechariah spoke truly of a Messiah who would "cut off the chariot...the horse...and the battle bow...he shall speak peace unto the heathen."

The Prince of Peace, whose only battle cry could be: *Victory to the Meek!* rode no fiery charger amidst a panoplied army, but sat a gentle steed, small and serviceable to the daily ways of peace. His "warriors," no ostentatious stalwarts, were only an unimposing band of selfless disciples. Verily, this King, before whom the multitudes spread their branches of palm, demonstrated once again that a son of God celebrates his dominion in meekness and lowliness of pride.

When Jesus rebuked the Pharisees, he meant that scripture must be fulfilled this day; that Zechariah's words, which required the multitudes to "rejoice greatly" and "shout," should come to pass. If men were forced to "hold their peace," the very stones—permeated too with God, essential in every atom of creation—would be empowered to hold faith with the scriptures.

Men of divine realization, like Jesus and John the Baptist, know that God alone upholds the structure of the universe, and that He can flame forth from every clod and molecule. Because to mortal eyes a stone appears inert and Spiritless, both Jesus and John used it, on similar occasions of public rebuke, as a challenge to faith. The story concerning John is as follows:

> *Then said he to the multitude that came forth to be baptized of him, "O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance, and begin not to say within yourselves, 'We have Abra-*

ham to our father'; for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham" (Luke 3:7–8).

There is a further interpretation of Jesus' reference to the stones. If the cosmos is against might, if the sun wars not with the planets but retires at dueful time to give the stars their little sway, what avails our mailed fist? Shall any peace indeed come out of it? Therefore, Jesus implied, by his repudiation of the Pharisees' request, that divine justice is no figurative abstraction, and that a man of peace, though his tongue be torn from its roots, will yet find his speech and his defence in the bedrock of creation, the universal order itself.

Peace draws its strength and support from the universal order of God's creation

Jesus said to the Pharisees, "How think you to silence men of peace? As well may you hope to throttle the voice of God, whose very stones sing His glory and His omnipresence. Will you demand that men not celebrate peace, but war only? Then make your preparations to overtopple the foundations of the world; for it is not gentle men alone, but stones, or earth, and water and fire and air that will rise up against you to bear witness of His ordered harmony."

Thus, as Zechariah had long ago foreseen, Christ on this occasion spoke "peace to the heathen," proclaiming that not cruelty but goodwill arms the universal sinews. He who "is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass" will know the endless fruits of victory, sweeter to the taste than any nurtured on the soil of blood.

"O Jerusalem, I weep for you! If you only knew at the present time all the political, social, and divine peace you are enjoying due to my presence! But you fail to see this great opportunity the Divine Father is giving you to acquire everlasting peace. The day will arrive, O people of Jerusalem, when the wisdom of you and your children will be shrouded beneath the soil of ignorance and the edifice of order and harmony will disintegrate into stony rubble because you neither know nor appreciate this visitation of the Divine—as expressed in me—which was ordained for your benefit and upliftment."

The sorrowful compassion Jesus expressed was not spoken egotistically, but as an impersonal glorification of the presence of God made manifest within himself. He grieved that the people of Jerusalem did not realize the importance of the magnanimous grace of this divine manifestation through which liberation was offered to them. He

observed that their blinded intelligence and foolish misuse of free will could neither appreciate nor receive the unlimited Divine Power of salvation within him. Because of this lack, precluding their redemption, Jesus prophesied that the people of Jerusalem in the future would be pestered by war, famine, and increasing spiritual darkness.*

And Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves, and said unto them, "It is written, 'My house shall be called the house of prayer'; but ye have made it 'a den of thieves.'"†

And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple; and he healed them. And when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying in the temple, and saying, "Hosanna to the son of David"; they were sore displeased, and said unto him, "Hearest thou what these say?"

And Jesus saith unto them, "Yea; have ye never read, 'Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings Thou hast perfected praise'?" And he left them, and went out of the city into Bethany; and he lodged there (Matthew 21:12–17).

"Have you never read in the scriptures that out of the mouth of God's littlest ones, sincere and guileless, shall burst forth praise of Divinity in power to quell inimical dissenters of truth?"‡

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* Jesus' prophecy came to pass in A.D. 70, when the city of Jerusalem was completely destroyed by the Romans after the Jews' four-year violent revolt. Wars between the Jews and Romans continued until A.D. 135. *Encyclopaedia Britannica* states: "After this defeat Jerusalem became a Roman colony; a temple to Jupiter was erected there, and Jews were prevented from entering the city until the 4th century. When the Romans had entered Palestine in 63 B.C., they practised a relatively humane occupation until *c.* A.D. 66–70. They did not interfere with religious practices unless they considered them a threat to Rome, and their rights of requisition were precise and limited."

† Cf. parallel references in John 2:12–17 (commented on in Discourse 12), and in Mark 11:15–17 and Luke 19:45–46.

‡ "O Lord our Lord, how excellent is Thy name in all the earth! who hast set Thy glory above the heavens.

"Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast Thou ordained strength because of Thine enemies, that Thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger" (Psalms 8:1–2).

In citing the Psalm of King David, Jesus chided the arrogant priestly authorities who took offence at the children in the temple glorifying the Divine Presence he manifested, hailing him as the son of David, the prophesied saviour. ("Hosanna"—a joyous shout of devout acclamation, from the Hebrew *hoshi 'an-nna,* "pray save" us.) Jesus pointed out that praise is perfected into a mighty force when it is a genuine response to truth. The minds and speech of pure children that are yet unsullied by politics, insincerity, manipulativeness, and falsehoods have a responsive appreciation of truth through a clearer innate intuition that is not distorted by prejudicial rationalizations.

Now in the morning as he returned into the city, he hungered. And when he saw a fig tree in the way, he came to it, and found nothing thereon, but leaves only, and said unto it, "Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever." And presently the fig tree withered away. And when the disciples saw it, they marvelled, saying, "How soon is the fig tree withered away!"

*Jesus answered and said unto them, "Verily I say unto you, if ye have faith, and doubt not, ye shall not only do this which is done to the fig tree, but also if ye shall say unto this mountain, 'Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea'; it shall be done. And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive" (Matthew 21:18–22).**

In the incident of the hapless fig tree we have a provocative contrast between the human and the divine, manifesting simultaneously in one man: human reaction at a disappointment, taking form in divine power. Jesus was hungry and looked for fruit on the leafy fig tree, but at the wrong season.† Finding no figs, he just willed the tree to cease to exist! The will and life force present in the body of Jesus, being in tune with the Cosmic Will and Cosmic Life, simply withdrew the life

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* Cf. parallel reference in Mark 11:12–14 and Mark 11:20–25. Regarding this incident, the Gospel According to St. Mark relates that Jesus cursed the fig tree in the morning on his way into Jerusalem, where he cast the money changers out of the temple; and that leaving the city in the evening he and the disciples passed the tree again and saw that it had withered.

† Mark 11:13: "...he found nothing but leaves; for the time of figs was not yet."

and will that erstwhile had sustained the fig tree. Just as an electrical engineer who has access to all the switches of the main dynamo that controls the electricity in a city can put off or on at will a single light or all the lights, so Jesus, being one with the Cosmic Electrical Engineer, was able to switch on life in the extinguished lamp of the lifeless body of Lazarus, or switch off the life that coursed through the fig tree.

Jesus' withering of the fig tree: a glimpse of his contrasting human and divine natures

Though rationally viewed as unreasonable for Jesus to expect the fig tree to yield fruit during the off-season (for it produced in accordance with nature's laws, instituted by the Creator), still the impulsive act was yet another demonstration to show the disciples that the God-image in man is unconstrained by even the irritating implacability of the material universe. Man owns the omnipotence of God, *provided* he forsakes delusion and, by meditation, lifts his consciousness from the body and unites it with God's perfect reflection within him. The Hindu scriptures say that one who knows the Spirit becomes the Spirit. Jesus demonstrated that oneness with Spirit by his Spirit-united dominion over all things.

When the disciples expressed surprise at the prompt response of the fig tree to this sentence of destruction, Jesus spoke of the power of faith—not blind faith, but perfect conviction born of God-realization and the personal command of great metaphysical laws that have the power to move mountains and grant any prayer.*

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* See Discourse 46 for commentary on Jesus' teachings about the power of faith expressed in these verses.

DISCOURSE 65

Jesus Teaches in the Temple at Jerusalem for the Last Time

Jesus Extols the Advancement of Repentant Sinners
Over That of the Spiritually Arrogant

❖

A Parable of God's Plan of Heavenly Harmony for Souls on Earth,
and Man's Obstruction of It

❖

Jesus Describes the Karma Reaped
by Those Who Accept or Reject God's Messengers

❖

"Render Unto Caesar":
The Spiritual Attitude Toward Fulfilment of Worldly Duties

❖

Son of God or Son of David: Christ Consciousness in the Messiah

❖

The Widow's Mite:
Spiritual Value of Giving With Heartfelt Devotion

"Jesus' adversaries in the temple...were actively seeking opportunity to apprehend him....Jesus then made clear to them, by means of a parable, the searing truth that their arrogant priestly and social consciousness had denied them the blessing of salvation."

And when he was come into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came unto him as he was teaching, and said, "By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority?"

And Jesus answered and said unto them, "I also will ask you one thing, which if ye tell me, I in like wise will tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven, or of men?"

And they reasoned with themselves, saying, "If we shall say, 'From heaven'; he will say unto us, 'Why did ye not then believe him?' But if we shall say, 'Of men'; we fear the people; for all hold John as a prophet." And they answered Jesus, and said, "We cannot tell."

And he said unto them, "Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things. But what think ye? A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, 'Son, go work today in my vineyard.' He answered and said, 'I will not': but afterward he repented, and went. And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, 'I go, sir': and went not.

"Whether of them twain did the will of his father?"

They say unto him, "The first."

Jesus saith unto them, "Verily I say unto you, that the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not: but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him.

"Hear another parable: There was a certain householder, which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a winepress in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country: And when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits of it. And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another. Again, he sent other servants more than the first: and they did unto them likewise.

"But last of all he sent unto them his son, saying, 'They will reverence my son.' But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, 'This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance.' And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him. When the lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen?"

They say unto him, "He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons."

Jesus saith unto them, "Did ye never read in the scriptures, 'The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes'? Therefore say I unto you, the kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder."

And when the chief priests and Pharisees had heard his parables, they perceived that he spake of them. But when they sought to lay hands on him, they feared the multitude, because they took him for a prophet.

—Matthew 21:23–46

And Jesus answered and spake unto them again by parables, and said, "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son, and sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come. Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, 'Tell them which are bidden, "Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage."' But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise: And the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them.

"But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and

burned up their city. Then saith he to his servants, 'The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy. Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage.' So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests.

"And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: And he saith unto him, 'Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment?' And he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, 'Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

"For many are called, but few are chosen."

Then went the Pharisees, and took counsel how they might entangle him in his talk. And they sent out unto him their disciples with the Herodians, saying, "Master, we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest thou for any man: for thou regardest not the person of men. Tell us therefore, what thinkest thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not?"

But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, "Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites? Shew me the tribute money." And they brought unto him a penny. And he saith unto them, "Whose is this image and superscription?"

They say unto him, "Caesar's."

Then saith he unto them, "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's." When they had heard these words, they marvelled, and left him, and went their way.

*—Matthew 22:1–22**

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* Matthew 22:23–33 were commented on in Discourse 62. Verses 35–40 were commented on in Discourse 53.

And Jesus answered and said, while he taught in the temple, "How say the scribes that Christ is the son of David? For David himself said by the Holy Ghost, 'The Lord said to my Lord, "Sit thou on My right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool."' David therefore himself calleth him 'Lord'; and whence is he then his son?" And the common people heard him gladly.

And he said unto them in his doctrine, "Beware of the scribes, which love to go in long clothing, and love salutations in the marketplaces, and the chief seats in the synagogues, and the uppermost rooms at feasts: Which devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayers: these shall receive greater damnation."

And Jesus sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury: and many that were rich cast in much. And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing.

And he called unto him his disciples, and saith unto them, "Verily I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury: For all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living."

—Mark 12:35–44

DISCOURSE 65

Jesus Teaches in the Temple at Jerusalem for the Last Time

And when he was come into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came unto him as he was teaching, and said, "By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority?"

And Jesus answered and said unto them, "I also will ask you one thing, which if ye tell me, I in like wise will tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven, or of men?"

And they reasoned with themselves, saying, "If we shall say, 'From heaven'; he will say unto us, 'Why did ye not then believe him?' But if we shall say, 'Of men'; we fear the people; for all hold John as a prophet." And they answered Jesus, and said, "We cannot tell."

And he said unto them, "Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things. But what think ye? A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, 'Son, go work today in my vineyard.' He answered and said, 'I will not': but afterward he repented, and went. And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, 'I go, sir': and went not.

"Whether of them twain did the will of his father?"

They say unto him, "The first."

Jesus saith unto them, "Verily I say unto you, that the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you. For

*John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not: but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him" (Matthew 21:23–32).**

Jesus extols the advancement of repentant sinners over that of the spiritually arrogant

Jesus' adversaries in the temple (long concerned about his growing popular acclaim generated by his miraculous healings, and about his defiant actions such as castigating the religious hierarchy and casting out the money changers and merchants from the temple precincts, and his nonconformist teachings) were actively seeking opportunity to apprehend him. Aware of their conniving, Jesus deliberately chose not to answer the chief priests and scribes when they asked him to declare by whose authority he did these works. He knew their query was to press him to proclaim before them, as he had to others, his oneness with the Father, grounds on which to arrest him on charges of blasphemy.† By answering their question with his simple question concerning the source of the powers of John the Baptist, he effectively balked his attackers: To admit John's divine authority would draw a deserved rebuke from Jesus as to why, then, they had not treated John as a holy prophet; and to deny that John's authority was heaven-bestowed would arouse the anger of the people.

Having confounded his enemies into silence, Jesus then made clear to them, by means of a parable, the searing truth that their arrogant priestly and social consciousness had denied them the blessing of salvation through John:

"A master had two devotees on earth, and he said to one of them: 'Son, go into the vineyard of meditation and labour there to grow the precious grapes of divine realization. After successful cultivation, those ripened fruits will yield to you the intoxicating wine of unending divine bliss.' But the devotee, succumbing to a temporary spate of delusion, replied: 'I will not meditate, for I am not in the mood to do so!' Yet after due deliberation, he shook off his spiritual inertia, recognising it as foolish disobedience to the master whose command had been

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* Cf. parallel references in Mark 11:27–33 and Luke 20:1–8.

† Even as in John 10:30–31 (Discourse 52) the people wanted to stone him for such an assertion, and in Matthew 26:64–66 (Discourse 73) he was condemned to die for it.

given only for the devotee's good. With deep devotion and resolve, he became faithful in his practice of meditation.

"Then the master came to the second devotee and asked him also to cultivate the fruits of meditation. The devotee answered readily, 'I will do so, Lord,' but failed utterly to keep his promise. Now, is it not evident to you which of them obeyed the will of the master?"

They all agreed that the first stubborn devotee, who had mended his ways, was the obedient one; not the courteous devotee whose compliant words were not expressed in action. Jesus then pinpointed the issue at hand: "Out of the truth within me, I declare unto you that even the publicans and harlots are superior to you in realization. For the great master John came to all of you, and yet you did not understand or accept him. But those you call sinners—who formerly had not listened to the voice of truth—deliberated when John came to them, then shook off delusion, repented, and began with faith to seek God through inner divine communion and obedience to His commandments. That is why they will soon work out the effects of their past evil actions and enter the kingdom of Cosmic Consciousness, long ahead of all of you chief priests and elders who proudly hold yourselves as superior by dint of your effete titles.

"Even after you had seen the change John wrought in erstwhile sinners—proof of his righteous life and God-wisdom—still you did not repent and enter the vineyard of meditation to labour for God-communion. No, you believed not in him nor his advice; neither did you repent of your haughty disobedience that you might be saved by following his example. Now you can judge for yourselves why the publicans and harlots who tuned in with the God-saturated John, can enter into the kingdom of God before you."

Jesus' words are an assurance to repentant transgressors of divine law: By following a God-inspired guru and by forsaking the ways of delusion, they can surely be received into the kingdom of God. Indeed, they will find salvation more quickly than will persons whose vanity about their own limited understanding and presumed moral sufficiency makes them disdain the help of the God-sent guru, being egotistically misled into thinking they have no need for such assistance in order to attain entry into God's presence in Cosmic Consciousness.

"Hear another parable: There was a certain householder, which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a winepress in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country: And when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits of it. And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another. Again, he sent other servants more than the first: and they did unto them likewise.

"But last of all he sent unto them his son, saying, 'They will reverence my son.' But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, 'This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance.' And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him. When the lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen?"

They say unto him, "He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons."

Jesus saith unto them, "Did ye never read in the scriptures, 'The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes'? Therefore say I unto you, the kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder."*

And when the chief priests and Pharisees had heard his parables, they perceived that he spake of them. But when they sought to lay hands on him, they feared the multitude, because they took him for a prophet (Matthew 21:33–46).†

In a simple parable of metaphysical truths, Jesus related how the Cosmic Householder, at the beginning of an aeons-long cycle of universal creation, made this earth as a fertile vineyard wherein His human children—soul-reflections of His own one Being—were to labour as "husbandmen" to cultivate and enjoy the fruits of all-freeing wisdom. He hedged in the earthly vineyard with the aura of His divine vibrations, and He dug into human consciousness a winepress of intuition and built

* Jesus is citing Psalms 118:22–23.

† Cf. parallel references in Mark 12:1–12 and Luke 20:9–19.

there a tower of spiritual vision. He then gave this vineyard into the care of His incarnate soul-labourers and "went into a far country," hid Himself in the transcendent plane of Cosmic Consciousness for the duration of that cycle of creation.*

A parable of God's plan of heavenly harmony for souls on earth, and man's obstruction of it

Then, "when the time of the fruit drew near" —when God expected that the tillers of the vines of wisdom to whom He had lent the fruitful vineyard would reap the harvest of many beautiful experiences—He sent out His prophets to gather from them some of their harvest of wisdom-nurtured love and gratitude. But the people of the earth, their pristine soul consciousness having devolved under the influence of delusion, refused to accept God's divine messengers, rejecting them violently. Many other prophets were sent to the earth and likewise were maligned and killed. One of these came in the form of John the Baptist. He too was treated shamefully.

Finally, the Lord of the vineyard resolved to send to the unappreciative, cruel people of the earth His sole reflection in all vibratory creation—the Son or Christ Consciousness—made manifest in the form of an avatar. God expected that His ungrateful people would now acknowledge Him by revering His son. But the people were drunk with delusion. In their perversity they wished to enjoy the blessings of the earth without interference of the guiding precepts of God or His emissaries. Notwithstanding the evidence that this son was "the heir," a true representation of God in whom His Consciousness was fully expressed, they slew him, hoping "to seize his inheritance," to rule the earth according to their own desires instead of according to the ways of righteousness.

Of course Jesus was now speaking of himself, foretelling the crucifixion that would climax the ill-treatment these self-serving officials had given him, and the result that would inevitably follow: The Lord of the vineyard of the earth through Cosmic Law would punish those responsible for the evil done to His son, and would give the vineyard

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* At the beginning of each recurring manifestation of creation (Day of Brahma), having set in motion the cosmic laws governing the universal structure, the Father-Creator turns over the operation of those laws to the Holy Ghost (Cosmic Vibratory Nature) and withdraws to the transcendent realm of Cosmic Consciousness beyond the vibratory universes, but reflects Himself in creation as the immanent Christ Consciousness.

See also explanation of the cycles of cosmic creation in *God Talks With Arjuna: The Bhagavad Gita* VIII:17–19 and IV:7–8.

to other tenants who would try to grow the fruits of wisdom cultivated and offered in grateful worship. When his listeners of malign intent had heard these parables and their omen of punishment, they "perceived that he spake of them."*

The "other husbandmen," those who would render to the Lord of the Vineyard "the fruits in their seasons," refers to future generations of devotees who would reverence Jesus' exemplary life and teachings. By devotion to the Christ Consciousness in this divine son, they would reap from their labours in the vineyard of the earth a bountiful harvest of God-wisdom: realization of the divine kingdom within them as a region so exceedingly abundant in bliss that they would willingly return to the Lord, in the form of praise and worship, the fruits they had gleaned.

Jesus went on to prophesy that the Christ Consciousness, which the builders of his own civilisation rejected, would be the principal stone required in constructing the temple of a heavenly life on earth. "'This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes,'" he quoted from scripture. "Therefore I say unto you that because you rejected the Christ Consciousness and me in whom that reflection of the Father was sent to you, the kingdom of God-consciousness will not manifest in you; but it will be manifest in those persons who will in future appreciate my message by establishing these truths in their consciousness. Anyone who shall resist the adamantine stone of these truths will find his life broken up with delusion, disharmony, and unhappiness. And those who will *deliberately* lead wrong lives, and wilfully defile my teachings and persecute those who are my true followers, will find that through their own folly the Cosmic Law inherent in this stone will fall upon them to their utter destruction."

Anyone who strikes a stone with his fist is hurt through his own unwise action and not because of any desire of the stone to harm him. Likewise, Jesus warned that anyone who is foolish enough to resist consciously the unbreakable truths set forth in his teachings will hurt himself by activating the Cosmic Law to destroy his spiritual life and delay his evolution toward salvation.

* As also expressed in the parallel reference to this story in Luke 20:16: "'He shall come and destroy these husbandmen, and shall give the vineyard to others.' And when they heard it, they said, 'God forbid.'"

And Jesus answered and spake unto them again by parables, and said, "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son, and sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come. Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, 'Tell them which are bidden, "Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage."' But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise: And the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them.

"But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city. Then saith he to his servants, 'The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy. Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage.' So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests.

"And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: And he saith unto him, 'Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment?' And he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, 'Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

*"For many are called, but few are chosen" (Matthew 22:1–14).**

How the kingdom of heaven can be entered by the appreciative devotee, through a proper response to the invitation of God, was illustrated by Jesus in the following way:

The Heavenly Father ("a certain king") sent one of His liberated devotees (the king's "son") to be born on earth so that, when the proper time came—when he had spiritually prepared his incarnate human instrumentality to accord with his God-ordained mission—his wedding with divine wisdom could be celebrated as an example for mankind, and earnest devotees might learn something of the joys of

* A similar parable is related in Luke 14:16–24 (see Discourse 58).

divine union through witnessing in his God-united life this sacred marriage.* Just as the wedding ceremony of an ideal couple inspires guests who are attuned with them with a moving example of love, so also, the ideal truth-wedded life of a saint or prophet inspires truth-seekers with the desire for their own union with wisdom.

Jesus describes the karma reaped by those who accept or reject God's messengers

Whenever a prophet is ready to begin his work on earth, God sends forth vibratory messengers to call all who are aware of these high vibrations to follow the illumined soul. It is a spiritual law that God Himself thus celebrates the Divine Union on earth of a liberated devotee truly wedded to truth and exalted principles, usually (except if the work of the liberated one is carried on behind the outward scenes of man) by means of these servants of magnetic vibrations issuing forth from Him in different directions as determined by the purpose of the prophet's mission. Seekers are thereby drawn to join the joyous festivities of spiritual feasting in honour of the liberated one wedded with the lovely Spirit of Truth.

So, in the instance of this parable, the initial invitation to "them that were bidden to the wedding" was wholly ignored. Then the Divine Father sent forth again the magnetic, vibratory messengers to signify to truth-seekers that they might join the ecstatic celebration of the prophet's God-united life, during which the choice delicacies of wisdom would be offered for all. But many of those invited remained heedless out of sheer spiritual carelessness, failing to recognise this invitation as a response of God to their former prayers. They dishonoured God's call to attend the soul-liberating event and continued with their material occupations. Others, superficial and rigid in their ignorance, stifled ("killed") outright the messengers of divine vibration that radiographed the announcement to their hearts.

When the Heavenly Father felt the wrong vibrations of rejection emanating from those He had sought to bless, He could not stay the armies of cosmic and karmic laws that govern all human actions. These laws punish wilful "murderers" of good vibrations by igniting the city of their consciousness with the unseen fire of purifying discipline. In

* See, for example, references in Discourses 4, 7, and 8 to the simultaneous dichotomy and unity of the human and divine nature in incarnate liberated souls. The everyman of their universal being undergoes the resistance and limitations of *maya* to at last demonstrate victory over delusion in their manifest Divine Union.

some who ignore an invitation from God, their spiritual sense is destroyed for a long time, until they repent and merit another opportunity.

As cited in the parable, the Gracious Lord yet a third time sent His invisible vibratory servants to speak to the hearts of other seekers. In response to the announcement of this ignorance-quelling ceremony, many would-be followers—of both high and low calibre—from the highways of life came to witness the liberated prophet's wedding with Truth.

Sincere souls on the path of Self-realization appreciate and are receptive to a prophet and his teachings. But among the throng there are also hypocrites who associate themselves with great masters—and with organisations promulgating their paths of truth—just for the glamour and festivity, or for personal prestige. So the implication of the parable is that the Divine Father came, as the Host, to examine the guests who had been attracted by His invitation. He discovered that a hypocrite had joined the devotees; he wore not a wedding garment of sincerity. When the Host accused him of hypocrisy, he could make no reply in his defence and remained speechless.

So the Omnipotent Host had the powerful spiritual vibrations force out this hypocrite whose understanding had not evolved sufficiently to join the good company of devout seekers. He was cast back into the land of self-created darkness. Too late the hypocrite bemoaned his ignorance, and wept and gnashed his teeth at his lost chance to attain light in his darkened state.

Many truth-seekers, owing to the varying degrees of intensity of their spiritual urges, intermittently draw the attention of God and receive His invitation into the heavenly consciousness within them; but only those few are chosen to enter into God's kingdom of Cosmic Consciousness who are meritorious according to their earnest, sustained interest in truth and in God, shown through their sincere efforts to spiritualize their lives by unceasing prayer and deep meditation.

Then went the Pharisees, and took counsel how they might entangle him in his talk. And they sent out unto him their disciples with the Herodians, saying, "Master, we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest thou for any man: for thou regardest not the person of men. Tell us therefore,

what thinkest thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not?"

But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, "Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites? Shew me the tribute money." And they brought unto him a penny. And he saith unto them, "Whose is this image and superscription?"

They say unto him, "Caesar's."

*Then saith he unto them, "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's." When they had heard these words, they marvelled, and left him, and went their way (Matthew 22:15–22).**

"Give to your earthly king Caesar the earthly things, such as monetary tribute, that he thinks belong to him," Jesus told the Pharisees, "but in your heart give to God all homage and credit, for He is the Supreme Sovereign, the real owner of all things material and mental, earthly and heavenly."

"Render unto Caesar": the spiritual attitude toward fulfilment of worldly duties

Jesus thus counsels all devotees to obey the customs of their country and abide by its laws, such as paying taxes. But even while fulfilling worldly obligations, they should inwardly pay their soul's homage to God alone, to Him who is the King of kings, who as Creator of one's native land, earth, heaven, is Owner of all things therein of whatsoever nature—familial, social, national, international, and cosmic.

Jesus had upheld this same principle on a previous occasion, cited in Matthew 17:24–27.† His words and their miraculous sequel on that occasion illustrated that man's proper fulfilment of heavenly laws automatically aids him in satisfying his liability to edicts made by man.

True religion is an art of living that harmonizes all aspects of man's *dharma*, righteous duty—material, mental, social, moral, and spiritual—neglecting nothing needful for balanced harmony in body, mind, and

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* Cf. parallel references in Luke 20:20–26 and Mark 12:13–17.

† "And when they were come to Capernaum, they that received tribute money came to Peter, and said, 'Doth not your master pay tribute?'...

"Jesus saith unto [Peter]...'Lest we should offend them, go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money: that take, and give unto them for me and thee.'" (See Discourse 47.)

soul. Jesus' words, "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's; and unto God, the things that are God's," are a reminder that as long as one lives in the material world, to shirk material responsibilities is to be lacking in wisdom. Bhagavan Krishna, by fulfilling perfectly his demanding material, social, and spiritual roles as both avatar and earthly king, without letting one duty interfere with the others, exemplified in a unique way this equilibrated consciousness. The serenity of a saint in Himalayan solitudes is not ruffled by conflicting crosscurrents of social and spiritual duties; but greater is the devotee whose spiritual attainments can pass undiminished through all tests of the world's harsh proving grounds.

Jesus' statement is also a warning to persons whose thoughts and desires entangle them in worldly life: They will have to "render unto Caesar what belongs to Caesar." Material involvements create material obligations, exacted according to the law of karma; but one whose heart and mind are fixed on God alone, the Utter Simplicity, is only minimally involved in the obligatory give-and-take of human existence.

And Jesus answered and said, while he taught in the temple, "How say the scribes that Christ is the son of David? For David himself said by the Holy Ghost, 'The Lord said to my Lord, "Sit thou on My right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool."' David therefore himself calleth him 'Lord'; and whence is he then his son?" And the common people heard him gladly (Mark 12:35–37).

Parallel reference:

While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, saying, "What think ye of Christ? Whose son is he?"

They say unto him, "The son of David."

He saith unto them, "How then doth David in spirit call him 'Lord,' saying, 'The Lord said unto my Lord, "Sit thou on My right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool"'? If David then call him 'Lord,' how is he his son?"*

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* Psalms 110:1.

*And no man was able to answer him a word, neither durst any man from that day forth ask him any more questions (Matthew 22:41–46).**

The scribes and Pharisees, as likewise many Christian believers to this day, did not understand the difference between "Jesus" ("Son of man") and "Christ" ("Son of God" or "only begotten Son")—between the incarnate Messiah and the infinite Christ Consciousness he embodied. Jesus' intent was not to deny that the human body of the Messiah or Christ was descended from King David, as both he and his listeners knew had been prophesied in scripture;† but to make clear that the all-pervading Christ Consciousness could not be limited to the physical body of a son of David or any other human being.

Son of God or son of David: Christ Consciousness in the Messiah

Jesus spoke to the Pharisees from his realization of the "Christ" as the Universal Consciousness present in all vibratory creation, and fully reflected in his own body, known as Jesus—and also that the Christ Consciousness was manifest to David through a vision, described in the Book of Psalms.

David "in spirit"—after spiritual upliftment by the Cosmic Vibration of the Holy Ghost—wrote that the Lord God (the Father existing beyond all vibratory creation) expressed His will to the Christ Consciousness (the Lord of Creation). The Father's vibratory message articulated in interpretation might be expressed thus: "The Lord said unto my Lord, 'Be Thou the Abiding Existence of My true reflected Presence in creation, enthroned by My side in My consciousness of Immutable Righteousness and Truth. Exert Thy reigning influence over all workings in creation until, through My almighty power of love in You, I make Your satanic enemies of delusion—who constantly obstruct Your perfect works—Your footstool and Your slaves.'"

Jesus made the indisputable point that David would not have used the title "my Lord" in speaking of a son.‡ David clearly perceived the

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* Cf. additional parallel reference in Luke 20:41–44.

† See Discourse 36.

‡ For a father to speak deferentially to a son or descendant would be completely out of keeping with the patriarchal culture to which Jesus and David belonged.

distinction between the Universal Christ and its manifestation in human form as the Messiah.

The interchange of the Intelligence between the Transcendent and the Immanent "Lords" (Cosmic Consciousness and Christ Consciousness) manifested only temporarily in the consciousness of David by means of a vision. But since the Christ Consciousness was steadily and fully reflected in the life and consciousness of Jesus, he let himself be called "Christ," but explained that the Christ Consciousness in him could not accurately be called the son of David.

*And he said unto them in his doctrine, "Beware of the scribes, which love to go in long clothing, and love salutations in the marketplaces, and the chief seats in the synagogues, and the uppermost rooms at feasts: Which devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayers: these shall receive greater damnation."**

And Jesus sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury: and many that were rich cast in much. And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing.

And he called unto him his disciples, and saith unto them, "Verily I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury: For all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living" (Mark 12:38–44).†

Jesus was not only observing the people and the amount of their offerings, but with his intuitive perception he was also analysing their motivating spirit. He called to the attention of the disciples the action of the widow because her generous spirit made her tiny gift shine before God. Jesus cited the incident as a beautiful illustration of a divine principle: Although this poor widow put only a farthing in the temple treasury, her devotion magnified her offering; in the eyes of God she gave far more than all the rich and indifferent people who gave greater amounts but with no reverence or devotion in their

* See Discourse 55 for commentary on these verses.

† Cf. parallel reference in Luke 21:1–4.

hearts. Those who made impressive contributions were disbursing only a token of their abundant riches, at no inconvenience to themselves. But the widow, notwithstanding her own needs, gave unto God's cause all she had, even unto her very livelihood.

The widow's mite: spiritual value of giving with heartfelt devotion

There is spiritual profit in heeding the lesson Jesus' disciples learned that day: to give unto God's cause in a reverent spirit of selflessness, not pride. A rich man whose bequests are motivated not by devotion but by pride in his wealth will no doubt earn some good karma by benefiting the temple, but such an act does not meet the criteria of a great virtue according to Cosmic Law. It will not elevate the giver's consciousness in God nor activate the law of karma to yield spiritual fruits.* In contrast, when a person of meager means gives to God's cause even a few coins from a charitable heart, that offering, though small materially, is spiritually enriched and enriching.

God recognises not the quantity of the gifts given to His cause, but the quality of devotion accompanying them. Giving more does not necessarily signify greater devotion, nor does a smaller gift signify less devotion. Nevertheless, when a well-to-do person gives generously from his largess with pure devotion and no ulterior motive, the gift is accepted by God and reciprocated with blessings, and when a less-endowed person gives of his little store but prides himself that it was well given considering his means, or gives that pittance with an indifferent attitude, then his act, unlike the widow's, is spiritually devalued. A temple or church welcomes all benefactions; but God especially blesses those that are given in a spirit of sacrifice, love, and devotion.

In Oriental temples, flowers, fruits, and mônetary donations are given as offerings to God. These help to maintain the temple, and God Himself receives the devotion that rises from sincere human hearts expressed in those gifts purely offered as symbolic oblations.†

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* "Whatever sacrifice is offered, gift bestowed, or austerity performed without faith (devotion) is called '*asat*.' It is worthless here and in the hereafter" (*God Talks With Arjuna: The Bhagavad Gita* XVII:28).

† "The reverent presentation to Me of a leaf, a flower, a fruit, or water, given with pure intention, is a devotional offering acceptable in My sight" (*God Talks With Arjuna: The Bhagavad Gita* IX:26).

DISCOURSE 66

"The Hour Is Come, That the Son of Man Should Be Glorified"

Jesus Speaks of How His Sacrifice on the Cross Would Benefit the World

❖

"Shall I Pray to the Father to Save Me From This Hour?"

❖

The Voice of God Responds

❖

The Illuminating Guidance of a Guru's Wisdom

❖

Did Isaiah Prophesy God's Vengeance?

❖

"I Came Not to Judge the World, but to Save the World"

"In Jerusalem, in the days before the Passover feast, Jesus spoke again of the impending culmination of the divine drama of his life."

***And there were certain Greeks** among them that came up to worship at the feast: The same came therefore to Philip, which was of Bethsaida of Galilee, and desired him, saying, "Sir, we would see Jesus." Philip cometh and telleth Andrew: and again Andrew and Philip tell Jesus.*

And Jesus answered them, saying, "The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified. Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour.

"Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify Thy name."

Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, "I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again."

The people therefore, that stood by, and heard it, said that it thundered: others said, "An angel spake to him."

Jesus answered and said, "This voice came not because of me, but for your sakes. Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." This he said, signifying what death he should die.

The people answered him, "We have heard out of the law that Christ abideth for ever: and how sayest thou, 'The Son of man must be lifted up'? Who is this Son of man?"

Then Jesus said unto them, "Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth. While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light." These things spake Jesus, and departed, and did hide himself from them.

But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him: That the saying of Isaiah the

prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, "Lord, who hath believed our report? And to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?" Therefore they could not believe, because that Isaiah said again, "He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them." These things said Isaiah, when he saw His glory, and spake of Him.

Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.

Jesus cried and said, "He that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on Him that sent me. And he that seeth me seeth Him that sent me. I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness.

"And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day. For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, He gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that His commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak."

—John 12:20–50

DISCOURSE 66

"The Hour Is Come, That the Son of Man Should Be Glorified"

And there were certain Greeks among them that came up to worship at the feast: The same came therefore to Philip, which was of Bethsaida of Galilee, and desired him, saying, "Sir, we would see Jesus." Philip cometh and telleth Andrew: and again Andrew and Philip tell Jesus.

And Jesus answered them, saying, "The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified. Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour" (John 12:20–26).

In Jerusalem, in the days before the Passover feast, Jesus spoke again of the impending culmination of the divine drama of his life: "The time is nigh when my body will be glorified into Spirit. But first—well remember what I declare unto you—unless a grain of wheat is thrust into the ground and dies, it cannot multiply itself; but if the grain is buried, it will rise anew as a plant abundant in fruit."* Jesus was ap-

* John Wesley wrote about these words of Jesus: "Agreeable to his infinite knowledge, he singles out, from among so many thousands of seeds, almost the only one that dies

prising them of his foreknowledge that by the sacrifice of himself and the victory of his rising up over the finality of death the divinity in him would be magnified for the benefit of the world. If he sacrificed his body for truth, as he had lived for truth, he would not only enter into the eternal life of his infinite Self, but would show to others by his exemplary presence on earth and in omnipresence the way to their own eternal life.

Jesus speaks of how his sacrifice on the cross would benefit the world

A selfish existence focused on the self-preservation of one's own ego, with its attachment to the body and its love of all things temporal, is a mental hedge that prevents the soul from enlarging into Spirit. Jesus thus continued: "He who loves his physical life, giving undue solicitude to his body, will nevertheless lose the body and all its material trappings in the oblivion of death. But he who sacrifices attachment to the familiar comforts of this physical life to seek the Everlastingness behind the facade of matter will find his consciousness transmuted by salvation into Eternal Life."*

Responding to the devotion of his disciples, Jesus added: "If any devotee desires to serve the Spirit, which is within me, let him follow my Consciousness." (Only by meditation can the devotee lead his consciousness from the physical plane of the senses through subconsciousness and superconsciousness to Christ Consciousness.) "Any devotee who is in tune with me will be present on the plane of Christ Consciousness where I reside always, and he will be recognised and uplifted by the Father—the Transcendental Cosmic Consciousness."

"Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify Thy name" (John 12:27–28).

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in the earth: and which therefore was an exceeding proper similitude, peculiarly adapted to the purpose for which he uses it. The like is not to be found in any other grain, except millet, and the large bean."

* See also Discourse 41, commentary on Matthew 10:39, and Discourse 45, commentary on Matthew 16:25—verses in which this statement of Jesus is repeated.

After Jesus offered this assurance, his mind dwelt again upon the immediate future of his present incarnation, and he confided: "Now my soul is troubled because the time of my great ordeal is nearing. But what shall I say? Shall I pray to the Father to save me from this dark hour? I might—yet for this hour was I born!" The wrenching ignominy of Jesus' death followed by the glory of his resurrection would impact ensuing generations of the world with unforgettable recognition of his divine life and message of salvation into the kingdom of God. He would prove the victory of Spirit over body, of divine forgiveness over brutal human force, of compassion over cruelty, of the divine power of spiritual meekness over the contrasting egotism of temporarily triumphant material might. His humble submission at the cross would demonstrate the gentleness with which the Father stays His omnipotent hand when challenged by man's evil; the forgiveness Jesus expressed during the crucifixion of his body would bear witness of the loving and forgiving nature of the Father. With the courage of acceptance of his commission from God, Jesus declared: "Rather must I pray: 'Heavenly Father, inspire my wishes to conform to Thy wishes. Let Thy Name be glorified—let Thy Presence as the power of salvation in Thy Holy Ghost Vibration that lifts souls into Thy kingdom be made manifest through my ordeal.'"

"Shall I pray to the Father to save me from this hour?"

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Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, "I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again."

The people therefore, that stood by, and heard it, said that it thundered: others said, "An angel spake to him."

Jesus answered and said, "This voice came not because of me, but for your sakes. Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." This he said, signifying what death he should die (John 12:28–33).

When Jesus prayed, "Father, glorify Thy name; manifest the glory of Thy presence through the all-pervading Cosmic Vibration," immediately the disciples heard the Holy Vibration emanating from the silent ether, audible as significant sounds. This Voice, God's

response through the Cosmic Vibration (the quintessential medium of all manifestation), declared: "I have glorified My name as the Holy Ghost Vibration revealed in your life and all your works,* and I will glorify It again in your death and resurrection." But those around Jesus were confused concerning the source and meaning of the sounds: Some heard the words and said an angel had spoken; others heard only a rumble as of thunder.

The Voice of God responds

Then Jesus clarified that the ethereal voice of God which had spoken was not for his sake but to prove the truth of the testimony of his life as God-ordained. This is a thrilling account in that only rarely through the passing centuries does the usually taciturn God speak other than individually to His devotees in the secluded sanctuary of their souls; yet here, at the prayerful call of Jesus, He instantaneously broke His silence and, like a human father, within the hearing of many, assured the disciples and the faithful that Jesus truly represented His divine majesty.

Jesus went on to prophesy that according to the cosmic law of karma (the "judgment" visited upon this world), "the prince of this world" (the Christ Consciousness, God's reflection reigning in the material cosmos) would be "cast out" (ejected from bodily manifestation in Jesus). In this reference to "what death he should die" Jesus also added, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me": If during the painful death by crucifixion (his body elevated above the earth on the cross), his soul were lifted by the grace of God from the body and consciousness of its earth-imposed limitations into the infinite Christ Consciousness—victorious in spirit over death—word of his divine life and teachings would then attract the attention of all peoples for all times, and would be a beacon light of wisdom to lead receptive souls to freedom from cosmic delusion and its miseries.†

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* One such revelation is recounted in Luke 3:21–22: "Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass, that Jesus also being baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, 'Thou art My beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased.'" (See Discourse 6.)

Of the works of Jesus that would manifest the salvation-bestowing Holy Ghost, John the Baptist had declared: "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire" (Matthew 3:11; see Discourse 6).

† Twice earlier Jesus had referred to "the son of man" being "lifted up": See commentaries on John 3:14 (Discourse 14) and John 8:28 (Discourse 51).

A struggle between the physical and divine natures of Jesus is indicated in his expression of uncertainty concerning final victory over the flesh. The words, "if I be lifted up," loom significant. They bespeak the distinct certainty that this climactic event in the life of Jesus, even though foretold by the prophets of the coming Messiah, *could* have been changed at this time if Jesus had succumbed to the temptation of mortal weakness and used his free will to pray to the Father to "save me from this hour."

> *The people answered him, "We have heard out of the law that Christ abideth for ever:* and how sayest thou, 'The Son of man must be lifted up'? Who is this Son of man?"*
>
> *Then Jesus said unto them, "Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth. While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light." These things spake Jesus, and departed, and did hide himself from them (John 12:34–36).*

In their unwillingness to believe in Jesus, the people would not grasp the distinction between the Christ, who "abideth forever," and "the Son of man," who must be "lifted up" into the divine light of Christ Consciousness, even though Jesus had clearly pointed it out to them when speaking about whether Christ was the son of David.† Previously, when he had taught in the temple at Jerusalem, he had told them: "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."‡ Thus on the present occasion, refraining from answering the intellectually disputatious questions of these unreceptive individuals, Jesus instead emphasized to his disciples that for only a little while would the light

The illuminating guidance of a guru's wisdom

* Reference to Isaiah 9:7: "Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever."

† Mark 12:35–37 and Matthew 22:41–46 (see Discourse 65).

‡ John 8:12 (see Discourse 51).

of Christ Consciousness continue to manifest in his body. He advised them to hasten along the path in the aureole of his divine presence, lest the darkness of delusion come upon them and try to prevent them from reaching the kingdom of Cosmic Consciousness.

A devotee who presumes to follow the spiritual path without the illuminating guidance of a guru's wisdom "walketh in darkness [and] knoweth not whither he goeth."* Therefore, Jesus urged his disciples, "With all your might strive to be one with the Light in me, that you also may be children of divine wisdom and immortality as I am." He was saying that all devotees who "believe in the light"—the Christ light that was in him—would be in tune with him, and hence with God, and would come to know themselves as "children of light," individualized reflections of the Divine Splendour, in essence like unto God their Father.

But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him: That the saying of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, "Lord, who hath believed our report? And to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?"† Therefore they could not believe, because that Isaiah said again, "He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them."‡ These things said Isaiah, when he saw His glory, and spake of Him.

Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God (John 12:37–43).

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* Cf. Gospel of Thomas, trans. Pico Iyer (London: Concord Grove Press, 1983), verse 24:

"His disciples requested: 'Teach us about the place where you live, for we must seek it.'

"He said: 'He who has ears to hear, let him hear. There is Light in a Man of Light, who gives Light to the world. If he does not give Light, there is only darkness.'"

† Isaiah 53:1.

‡ Isaiah 6:10.

The references to Isaiah in the above passage are easily misinterpreted unless one understands that God never deliberately or revengefully—for any reason—causes deterioration of human beings in punishment for their sins. When Isaiah wrote about the people's eyes having been blinded and their hearts hardened, it was rather that they themselves, by their own wrong materialistic actions, had obscured their fine, God-given faculties of intelligence and feeling, rendering themselves incapable of apprehending the manifestations of His presence and the working of His laws in creation—unwilling even to turn to Him so that He could heal them.*

Did Isaiah prophesy God's vengeance?

Most human beings carry within them the seeds of past-life erroneous actions in the form of present tendencies and effects. These products of their own deliberate wrong behaviour make them—to greater or lesser degree, depending on their karma—blinded or crippled in understanding and intuitive perception, unable to grasp divine wisdom and act accordingly. It was those who saw, yet did not see, God's wonders in the life of Jesus, discounting and even persecuting him, that Saint John cites as fulfilment of Isaiah's prophecy.

Illumined saints and prophets such as Isaiah perceive God directly and proclaim His holy word: "He saw His glory, and spake of Him." Yet of the many who hear, "who hath believed our report? And to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?" That is, who has the receptive heart of intuitive feeling to recognise the almighty arm of the Lord's will—His Righteousness made manifest in His cosmic laws and conveyed through the voice of His emissaries?

"The Lord hath made bare His holy arm in the eyes of all nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.... Behold, My servant shall deal prudently, he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high....So shall he sprinkle many nations..." (Isaiah 52:10–15). These and the succeeding verses, through the entirety of Isaiah chapter 53,† are prophetic references to the coming of Christ, foretelling also the spiritual blindness of the people that would cause him to be rejected.

Though demonstrated proof of the divine credentials of Jesus stirred belief in many of the ruling class, they were not forthcoming in

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* Isaiah 6:10 is also commented on in Discourse 37, in the context of Matthew 13:14–17.

† See commentary, Discourses 45 and 63.

openly following and supporting him, lest they lose their social standing in the synagogue at the judgment of the Pharisees.

In all times and places, it seems, public persons similarly secure themselves from unfavourable scrutiny and ostracism by maintaining the "right" profile of religious practices and affiliation, notwithstanding their inner conviction and acceptance of deeper truths—such as the practice of the yoga science of meditation for personal experience of God and the ultimate verities. Man loses much of the grace of God when he gives preference to insubstantial human esteem over the perdurable, everlastingly worthy and fruitful appreciative recognition of God.

Jesus cried and said, "He that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on Him that sent me. And he that seeth me seeth Him that sent me. I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness.

"And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day. For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, He gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that His commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak" (John 12:44–50).

Jesus gave repeated testimony to his devotees and followers of his union with God the Father: that within his physical self was Christ Consciousness, and behind that was Cosmic Consciousness; and that all who tuned in with his inner Self, or Christ Consciousness, would realize his true nature and be led from the pall of delusion and misery into the eternal light of God's kingdom.

"I came not to judge the world, but to save the world"

He who was an incarnation of the Father's forgiving, compassionate nature was careful to explain that he came with no commandment to punish those who would not believe in his words; rather he came to save those worldly people who *would* listen to him—even

those who rejected him at first but became believers afterwards.* His words of divine power and truth, even if initially disdained, would remain as latent vibratory seeds in potentially receptive subconscious minds. That is why Jesus said, "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day": At the end of their lives, those who had heard truth and spurned it would realize the folly of their evil actions contrasted with the wisdom carried in their memories. Too late to reform, they would see that they had punished themselves by the karmic judgment of their actions. Jesus addressed especially those to whom he gave the blessed opportunity to receive the grace of God-contact. Any truth-seeker who rejects communion with the Christ Consciousness by turning away from the teachings of one who is imbued with that Consciousness, creates his own punishment of bad karma that will long condemn him to lightless ignorance.

"For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, He gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak": When the Christ Consciousness uttered words of wisdom through Jesus, it was because the Cosmic Consciousness, from which all things emanate, vibrated Its wishes as a great commandment concerning what should be expressed to the world through the lips of Jesus, as speeches and parables to the multitude, and sayings and advice with deeper explanation to the disciples.†

"And I know that His commandment is life everlasting": The wisdom dropped into the Christ Consciousness of Jesus from the Cosmic Consciousness, and formulated into words by him, is eternally true and will give unto all the enlightenment of life everlasting. "Whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak"—whatever the physical self of Jesus uttered at the prompting of the Christ Consciousness in him was what the Cosmic Consciousness vibrated as a commandment to him to be given for the guidance of the world.

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* Cf. John 3:17 (Discourse 15): "For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved."

† Cf. John 8:28 (Discourse 51): "I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things."

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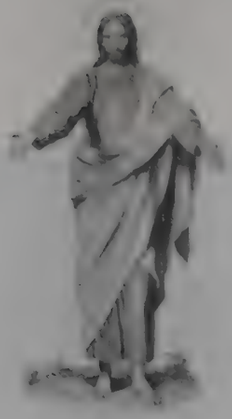

DISCOURSE 67

Did Jesus Prophesy His Second Coming and the End of the World?

True Significance of Jesus' Words About "the End of the World"

❖

The Metaphysical Cause of Wars, Famines, and Natural Catastrophes

❖

The True "Second Coming" of Christ: In Each Devotee's Own Consciousness

❖

How Devotees Can Recognise the Signs of Approaching Liberation

❖

"As in the Days of Noah": The Sorry Fate of the Spiritually Heedless

❖

Parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins: The Need for Continuous Spiritual Zeal

"Jesus in a masterly fashion, in intermixing prophecy and metaphor, answered the questions of his disciples....These predictions...had obviously a deeper metaphysical meaning."

And Jesus went out, *and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to him for to shew him the buildings of the temple.*

And Jesus said unto them, "See ye not all these things? Verily I say unto you, there shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down."

And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, "Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?"

And Jesus answered and said unto them, "Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, 'I am Christ'; and shall deceive many. And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet.

"For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows.

"Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.

"And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.

"When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) Then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains: Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house: Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes.

"And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! But pray ye that your flight be not in

the winter, neither on the Sabbath day: For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.

"And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.

"Then if any man shall say unto you, 'Lo, here is Christ, or there'; believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. Behold, I have told you before. Wherefore if they shall say unto you, 'Behold, he is in the desert'; go not forth: 'Behold, he is in the secret chambers'; believe it not. For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together.

"Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

"And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

"Now learn a parable of the fig tree; when his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh: So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors.

"Verily I say unto you, this generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away. But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.

"But as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the

flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

"Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come."

*—Matthew 24:1–42**

"Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were wise, and five were foolish. They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept.

"And at midnight there was a cry made, 'Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him.' Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said unto the wise, 'Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out.' But the wise answered, saying, 'Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves.'

"And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut. Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, 'Lord, Lord, open to us.' But he answered and said, 'Verily I say unto you, I know you not.' Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh."

—Matthew 25:1–13†

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* The remainder of Matthew 24 (verses 43–51)—the parable of the faithful and wise servant versus the evil servant—is commented on in Discourse 56 with its parallel from the Gospel According to St. Luke.

† Matthew 25:14–30 (Parable of the Ten Talents) are omitted here. See commentary on the similarly worded Parable of the Ten Pounds related by Jesus in Luke 19:12–28 (Discourse 63).

DISCOURSE 67

Did Jesus Prophesy His Second Coming and the End of the World?

And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to him for to shew him the buildings of the temple.

*And Jesus said unto them, "See ye not all these things? Verily I say unto you, there shall not be left here one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down" (Matthew 24:1–2).**

Jesus saw in his mind's eye that the monumental structures so impressive to his disciples would in a future time, without fail, crumble to pieces, their every stone tumbling down to disintegrate in the earth.† So he reminded the disciples of the short-lived nature of even the grandest and most formidable works of man. Famous edifices amassed of many seemingly perdurable stones, as also celebrated human lives built of innumerable valued thoughts and experiences, all would in time be reduced to dust and cosmic invisibility. Why be overawed by Jerusalem's temple or any other transient accomplishment of

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* Cf. parallel references in Mark 13:1–2 and Luke 21:5–6.

† Jesus had already prophesied the general destruction of Jerusalem, which came to pass about thirty years after his ascension during the revolt of the Jewish people against Rome (see Discourse 64). The culmination of this war was the destruction of the temple in A.D. 70, after which only one section of a wall remained standing (known as the Western Wall, or Wailing Wall, a place of Jewish pilgrimage to this day).

men or nations? Rather, Jesus wanted his followers to focus their attention within on the everlasting kingdom of God.

And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, "Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?"*

And Jesus answered and said unto them, "Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, 'I am Christ'; and shall deceive many. And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet.

"For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows.

"Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.

"And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come" (Matthew 24:3–14).†

Jesus in a masterly fashion, in intermixing prophecy and metaphor, answered the questions of his disciples: When would the destruction of the temple occur? What signs would announce his coming and the end of the world?

Addressing the question of his own reappearance, he warned (in the above verses and again in verses 23–28) that even during the

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* The disciples are identified as Peter, James, John, and Andrew in the parallel version of this verse in the Gospel According to St. Mark. Luke 21:37–38 tells us: "In the day time he was teaching in the temple; and at night he went out, and abode in the mount that is called the mount of Olives. And all the people came early in the morning to him in the temple, for to hear him."

† Cf. parallel references in Mark 13:3–10, 13 and Luke 21:7–11, 16–19.

lifetime of the disciples many false prophets would claim to be the returned Christ, and that the disciples must not give any credence to these manifestations of the influence of cosmic delusion. Adding to his prediction of the destruction of the temple, he foretold that "wars and rumours of wars" would continue, as also "famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places." He counselled his disciples not to lose their untroubled consciousness of soul immortality even when they witnessed such dire events, which "must come to pass" due to the effects of mass evil actions.

Jesus tells his disciples of their future persecutions and ultimate salvation

Jesus also spoke of the persecutions—and ultimate reward—that awaited his faithful disciples: "Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake....But he that shall endure to the end, the same shall be saved."

A similar prediction made by Jesus to his disciples is recorded in the Gospel According to St. Luke: "And ye shall be betrayed both by parents, and brethren, and kinsfolks, and friends; and some of you shall they cause to be put to death. And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake. But there shall not an hair of your head perish. In your patience possess ye your souls"* —("neither by persecution nor death will anyone be able to destroy a single spiritual hair on your head of wisdom; in patient, undisturbed calmness, and with will power to remain inwardly unaffected, you will repossess the forgotten consciousness of your immortal soul").

Thus when Jesus said, "Then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another," he was foreseeing not only the outrage against his immediate disciples, but also the mass denunciation and persecution of early Christians,† how un-Christian members of the same family would turn against their Christian relatives and even cause their death. Yet all devotees have his assurance that by patiently concentrating on the immutability of their souls—even during persecution or death—they will ultimately realize their

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* Luke 21:16–19. The parallel to this verse in St. Matthew's Gospel is cited earlier, on the occasion when Jesus sent the disciples out to preach and predicted the persecutions they would encounter. See Discourse 41 for commentary in that context.

† Intermittent but violent Roman persecution of the early Christians did not finally end until Constantine the Great became emperor in A.D. 312.

immortality and peace in God, the salvation earned by those "that shall endure to the end."

Jesus' prophecy that after his passing "some of you shall they cause to be put to death" materialised with fearful accuracy as, one by one, most of the twelve were martyred—stabbed, crucified, beheaded, stoned, flayed alive, or pierced with arrows.* But he foretold that in spite of all such persecutions and their seemingly ominous portent, through the sacrifices of the faithful and because of the decree of God, his teaching would be preached among all nations. Indeed, the message of Jesus has been proclaimed to receptive souls worldwide; the New Testament itself has been translated and published in most of the languages of the world.

True significance of Jesus' words about "the end of the world"

These predictions, as being linked to the end of the world, in answer to the disciples' last question, had obviously a deeper metaphysical meaning. Jesus knew that the purpose for which the world was created would not be fulfilled so long as physical disturbances marred earth life. He intimated that disruptions in the potential harmony of nature presuppose human imperfection; and as long as human beings nurture their flawed mortality in desires for the pleasures of this world and misuse of their free will, they will be bound to cycles of birth and death on earth. Hence, as long as the earth is needed for the evolutionary reincarnation of souls, so long it has to bear its burdensome existence. But when all souls are liberated by manifesting Christ Consciousness, they will then be held in the bosom of God, and the captive swirling atoms of the uninhabited earth will be freed. All this Jesus signified when he said that the wars and catastrophes he prophesied would not be signs of the end of the

* According to tradition, the lives of a number of Jesus' early disciples ended in violent persecution: Matthew was slain with a sword in Ethiopia; Mark was dragged to death through the streets of Alexandria; Luke was hanged in Greece; John was put in a cauldron of boiling oil, but escaped miraculously, was banished to Patmos and died a natural death; Peter was crucified at Rome with his head downwards; James the Greater was beheaded at Jerusalem; James the Less was thrown from a pinnacle of the Temple, and then beaten to death; Bartholomew was flayed alive; Andrew was bound to a cross, and died preaching to his persecutors; Thomas was run through the body with a lance; Matthias was first stoned and then beheaded; Jude (Thaddeus) was shot to death with arrows; Barnabas of the Gentiles was stoned to death at Salonica; Paul, after various tortures and persecutions, was beheaded at Rome; data regarding the deaths of Philip and Simon the Canaanite are obscure and conflicting; Judas Iscariot hanged himself.

world, but rather warnings of great human sorrow: "But the end is not yet" or (as recorded in Luke) "the end is not by and by."

Jesus was also referring to the culmination of the earth's usefulness when he said: "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come." Jesus made his point by setting forth the proposition that when the teachings of Christ Consciousness saturated with the vibrations of Cosmic Consciousness—Spirit's omnipresence, *Kutastha Chaitanya,* reflected in the universe and in every soul—will be "preached," lived, in all parts of the world by Christlike disciples and followers of realized truth, their exemplary lives will be the highest testimony, witnessing unto all nations, of the way to liberation. When their ideally free lives will lead peoples of the earth to curb their waywardness and seek their own liberation through the attainment of Christ Consciousness, then and then only would the purpose of the world be fulfilled. Universal salvation—for which the world was created—being accomplished, the earth atoms would then be recalled in God.*

This explanation, which Jesus Christ dropped in my consciousness, reveals the misguided imagination of many so-called prophets who, every few years, prophesy to their credulous followers the end of the world—coming on such-and-such a date in such-and-such a year. No wonder Jesus warned about false prophets!

In a celebrated case in 1925, a fanatic self-elected reformer told his disciples that they should sell their properties, or give them away, and await the end of the world on a mountaintop near New York City. He promised that they would be received into heaven, while the rest of a spiritually disenfranchised humanity would perish in a great

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* "The Hindu scriptures declare that an earth such as ours is dissolved for one of two reasons: the inhabitants as a whole become either completely good or completely evil. The world mind thus generates a power that releases the captive atoms held together as an earth.

"Dire pronouncements are occasionally published regarding an imminent 'end of the world.' Planetary cycles, however, proceed according to an orderly divine plan. No earthly dissolution is in sight; many ascending and descending equinoctial cycles are yet in store for our planet in its present form" (*Autobiography of a Yogi,* Chapter 16).

Of the two diametrically opposite causes for the dissolution of a world such as our earth—"completely good or completely evil"—Jesus emphasized the spiritualization of the human race as the ideal criterion. As for the souls that are still evolving upward, as is the case in even the highest ages, they are suitably accommodated for their continuing progress on some other "earth" in God's infinite universe.

See Discourses 52 and 39 for further references to the planetary cycles (*yugas*).

flee into the mountains: Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house: Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes.

"And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the Sabbath day: For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.

*"And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened" (Matthew 24:15–22).**

Parallel reference:

"And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Judea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto. For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled.

"But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck, in those days! for there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people. And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled" (Luke 21:20–24).

When Jesus spoke of Daniel's prophecy of "the abomination of desolation," the desecration of the "holy place," he was foreseeing the invasion of Jerusalem by many nations—not only the devastation wrought by the Romans during the lifetime of that generation, but for centuries to come.† There were to be wars in that

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* Cf. parallel reference in Mark 13:14–20.

† Jesus' reference is to Daniel 11:31: "And arms shall stand on his part, and they shall pollute the sanctuary of strength, and shall take away the daily sacrifice, and they shall place the abomination that maketh desolate."

History records the terrible events that Jesus predicted would befall Jerusalem in the "days of vengeance" by Roman armies under Titus:

"Titus advanced in the spring of 70, driving the Passover pilgrims before him to in-

land between the Christians and the non-Christians, wars between the Crusaders and the Saracens. The tribulations he describes show again the workings of the law of karma.

With no true safety to be found in a world of shocking desolations, Jesus adjures the faithful to "stand in the holy place"; Matthew adds "whoso readeth, let him understand": be firmly concentrated in Cosmic Consciousness in the holy temple of Spirit in the highest cerebral centre of transcendent divine perception. This sheltering Presence is the only true sanctuary impermeable to human affliction.

"But for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened," promised Jesus. Then, or today, if man had to pay *all* the karma accrued through incarnations "there should no flesh be saved." But, as he explained, even if true devotees have seeds of past evil actions in them, they will find that, because of their virtue and the grace of God, much of their karma is allayed and the term of suffering lessened.

"Then if any man shall say unto you, 'Lo, here is Christ, or there'; believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. Behold, I have told you before. Wherefore if they shall say unto you, 'Behold, he is in the desert'; go not forth: 'Behold, he is in the secret chambers'; believe it not. For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the

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crease the mouths to feed....Titus invested the city with a wall to prevent escape or the admission of supplies. Famine spread; the bodies of the dead were dropped over the walls into the valleys to avoid plague. There is even a record of cannibalism. Fugitives who fell into Roman hands were crucified in sight of the city, to the number of 500 a day.

"At the end of June the direct assault was resumed. The Antonia fortress was captured and razed. In July the daily Temple sacrifice ceased. On 6 August the Temple was stormed, and against Titus's orders destroyed by fire. The revolutionaries made their last stand in the Upper City. This was finally breached, and after five months' siege the city taken and razed to the ground. Prisoners were forced into the arena as gladiators....

"So were fulfilled the words of Jesus in Luke: 'When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then you must realise that it will soon be desolate' (21:20); '...the time will come when not a single stone will be left on another, everything will be destroyed' (21:6)."—*Great Events of Bible Times,* James Harpur, ed. (New York: Doubleday, 1987).

*coming of the Son of man be. For wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together" (Matthew 24:23–28).**

Parallel reference:

And he said unto the disciples, "The days will come, when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and ye shall not see it. And they shall say to you, 'See here'; or, 'See there': go not after them, nor follow them. For as the lightning, that lighteneth out of one part under heaven shineth unto the other part under heaven; so shall also the Son of man be in his day. But first must he suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation" (Luke 17:22–25).

Jesus speaks of the divine law of loyalty to the guru as a God-sent messenger

66 The time will come after my passing when you will be very anxious to see a Son of man, or human body, manifesting Christ Consciousness like this form of mine; but you will not find it (because such a complete manifestation of Christ Consciousness as is incarnate in my body occurs rarely, once in a long while—after many, many years or centuries). Ignorant enthusiasts will tell you, 'Look, we have found a great teacher here, or there in that land.' Be sure not to go after those false prophets, even though they show spectacular signs and wonders. Cling to your God-given Guru-saviour through whom you are to be redeemed according to divine ordinance."

Jesus reiterated that his true followers must guard against the temptation of listening to false prophets claiming to be Christlike teachers and trying to draw a following by magical or hypnotic tricks and "miracles" of spiritually useless phenomenal feats.† However,

* Cf. parallel reference in Mark 13:21–23.

† Miracles are not necessarily a sign of divine realization, as is obvious from the phenomenal feats of a number of celebrity wonder-workers who yet lack basic requisites of true saintliness and God-realization. In *Autobiography of a Yogi* I wrote: "Ostentatious display of unusual powers is decried by masters. The Persian mystic, Abu Said, once laughed at certain *fakirs* (Moslem ascetics) who were proud of their miraculous powers over water, air, and space.

"'A frog is also at home in the water!' Abu Said pointed out in gentle scorn. 'The crow and the vulture easily fly in the air; the Devil is simultaneously present in the East and in the West! A true man is he who dwells in righteousness among his fellowmen, who may buy and sell, yet is never for a single instant forgetful of God!'"

though Jesus denounced imposters, he never claimed that Christ Consciousness was manifested only in *his* body, called Jesus, and could not be manifested in any other Christlike soul at any other time.

Jesus spoke in the perfect humility of attunement with God in telling his disciples that they did not need any other spiritual guide, for in him was made manifest the fullness of God: "As the lightning starts from one part under heaven and shines to the most distant part, so the illumination of Christ Consciousness (the reflection of God in creation, 'under heaven') has become manifest in my body from Cosmic Consciousness, complete and absolute as was never in anyone else during this generation." "In his day," in the lifetime of Jesus, in "the Son of man," his physical life, the highest qualities of God were actualized. Thus the disciples had no cause to seek out any other prophets, lest in diffusing their spiritual focus they break the divine law of loyalty to him, their God-sent messenger, ordained to be their Guru-saviour, who would look after them until they attained final emancipation.* The promise of the guru, as Jesus intimated to the disciples, is that "If you are loyal to me, then even when my body is gone from the earth I will guide and protect you through my omnipresent consciousness."

"As lightning cometh out of the east and shineth even unto the west," so the Christ Consciousness that entered into the body of Jesus and illumined his whole being and his teachings would spread out to enlighten not only the minds of his immediate disciples, but all humanity for all time:

The true "second coming" of Christ: in each devotee's own consciousness

"Although my body, the Son of man in which the Christ Consciousness is personified, has to go through persecution and crucifixion and will be rejected by this generation, the significance of my life and teachings—because of their universality, completeness, and all-satisfying nature—will be accepted later throughout the world, as lightning covers the entire heavens. And just as eagles from far off locate a carcase and gather around to feast on it, so because of the Christ-essence arising from the sacrifice of my life, people from far parts of the earth will sense a filling repast in my teachings and gather about them to experience in their own consciousness the manifestation of Christ Consciousness, 'the coming of the Son of man.'"†

* See Discourse 6, discussion of the guru-disciple relationship.

† References to the Son of man are to be remembered as distinct from the Son of God. The

On a personal level, the disciples were to understand that whosoever, of whatever generation, would interiorize their consciousness in deep meditation would experience the coming of the Son of man—a manifestation of Christ Consciousness—through the Christ light in the spiritual eye ("the lightning which cometh out of the east") illumining and spiritualizing their whole being ("shining even unto the west"). Souls thus transformed from material body consciousness to refined soul realization find that the eagles of desires that feed on sensory temptations have fled, and in their stead the heretofore distant eagles of divine yearnings are attracted to feast on truth realizations.*

Alas, through the misinterpretation of the above passages, many think that Jesus will return to earth again like lightning out of heaven. The Christ Consciousness of which Jesus spoke can come a second time in anyone, at any time—provided that devotee enlarge the cup of his consciousness until it can hold the infinite ocean of Christ Consciousness. A thousand Christs sent to earth would not redeem its people unless they themselves became Christlike by purifying and expanding their individual consciousness to receive therein the second coming of the Christ Consciousness, as was manifested in Jesus. It is futile to look for another coming of Jesus out of the clouds of the sky (see pages 1311 ff.). God, who is taciturnly humble, though almighty, will never permit such a spectacular demonstration of His glory before the undevotional gaze of wicked people. But by moral discipline, continuous devotional prayer, and deep meditation, God can be contacted in inner silence as Ever New Joy. This joy felt in meditation denotes also contact with Christ Intelligence in its essential oneness with God. When the devotee feels God and His reflected Christ-Son as the tangible bliss of meditation, he should offer the unctuous worship of his love on the altar of that divine perception—with all the devotion of the heart, with all the intuition of the soul, with all the undivided

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Son of God is the macrocosmic, universal, omnipresent Christ Consciousness: the pure reflection of God in all creation. The Son of man refers to the manifested Christ Consciousness as experienced and expressed in and through incarnate consciousness, as in the life of Jesus—or in any advanced devotee who intermittently or permanently uplifts his consciousness to the state of Christ-realization, in which he perceives the Christ Consciousness reflected as his own soul, or manifested as a divine form. (See commentary on Matthew 24:29–32.)

* See pages 1321 ff., commentary on Luke's use of the metaphor of the eagles in a variant context and sequence of events, which elaborates the significance of eagles as desires.

Jesus' Entry Into Jerusalem

And a very great multitude spread their garments in the way; others cut down branches from the trees, and strewed them in the way. And the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, "Hosanna to the son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest."

—Matthew 21:8–9

The Prince of Peace, whose only battle cry could be: Victory to the Meek! *rode no fiery charger amidst a panoplied army, but sat a gentle steed, small and serviceable to the daily ways of peace. His "warriors," no ostentatious stalwarts, were only an unimposing band of selfless disciples. Verily, this King, before whom the multitudes spread their branches of palm, demonstrated once again that a son of God celebrates his dominion in meekness and lowliness of pride.*

—Paramahansa Yogananda

Drawing by Heinrich Hofmann

concentration of the mind, and with all the strength of the life energy of the body. Thereby the devotee fulfils the highest commandment, the paramount law required to know God. Contact with this Consciousness, experienced in the ever new joy of meditation, will be the real second coming of Christ—and it will take place right in the devotee's own consciousness.

"Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

"And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

"Now learn a parable of the fig tree; when his branch is yet tender and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh: So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors.

"Verily I say unto you, this generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away. But of that day and hour knoweth no man, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only" (Matthew 24:29–36).

Parallel reference:

"And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.

"And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh."

And he spake to them a parable; "Behold the fig tree, and all the trees; when they now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand. So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand.

"Verily I say unto you, this generation shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away.

*"And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man" (Luke 21:25–36).**

Jesus predicted: Immediately after disastrous tribulations have pervaded the earth because of its mass evil karma, "the beginning of sorrows," still greater troubles will ensue as the result of an escalation of evil. Through the destructive vibrations of the nations which are spread out over her, the earth's natural harmony will be lost, so that even the life-giving energy and light of the sun and moon will temporarily be diminished, and great "falling stars" of meteors will break loose from their orbits and fly into the atmosphere of the earth, creating geographic disturbances and arousing anxiety in the minds of nations. Owing to the disruption of the normally benign electromagnetic rays of the sun and moon, the many seas will be roiling with upheavals and tidal waves. Materially minded men's hearts and minds will be fearfully affected upon beholding the earthly upsets and the disarrangement of the heavenly forces brought on by man's own wrong vibrations.†

World disasters and man's subsequent spiritual awakening prophesied by Jesus

* Cf. additional parallel reference in Mark 13:24–33.

† Jesus was foreseeing the cataclysmic sufferings that would result from the mass evil karma of peoples debauched with ignorance. Consequent catastrophes are inevitably followed by a renascence of spiritual fervour among the repentant. Such events have come to pass, in greater or lesser degree, with tragic regularity through subsequent centuries of man's persistent disavowal of spiritual law.

(Publisher's Note:) In his book *Catastrophe: An Investigation Into the Origins of the*

And then as the people, heeding these warnings of the cosmic law, repent and through prayer and meditation gradually increase in spirituality, those who become sufficiently developed will behold "the sign of the Son of man in heaven," the tangible vision (sign) of Christ through the opening up of the awakened spiritual eye, leading into Christ Consciousness. They will be granted visions of embodied Christ Consciousness, materialised out of the mysteries of the heavenly astral region of light-forms, manifesting the power and glory of Cosmic Consciousness. "Then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn (repent), and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory."* The true devotees of *all* nations—those who had repented of past errors and developed spiritually—would be able to look into the spiritual eye and lift the consciousness from the peripheral bodily senses to the highest centre of inner divine perception in the cerebral region, where they could see the embodied Christ Consciousness (Jesus) coming out of the ethereal clouds of the darkness of closed eyes into the Christ light of the spiritual eye, his form radiant with luminous heavenly power and great glory.

The devotees will also behold angels or liberated souls vibrant with the Cosmic Vibration ("a great sound of a trumpet"). And such devotees will also behold, in the light of their awakened Christ Con-

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Modern World (New York: Ballantine Books, 1999), British journalist David Keys writes of one such incident whose particulars are strikingly reminiscent of Jesus' prophecy: "In A.D. 535–36 mankind was hit by one of the greatest natural disasters ever to occur. It blotted out much of the light and heat of the sun for eighteen months, and the climate of the entire planet began to spin out of control. The result, direct or indirect, was climatic chaos, famine, migration, war, and massive political change on virtually every continent." The author has compiled evidence that the source of these changes was a supermassive volcanic eruption in Indonesia, which ejected such a huge volume of ash and dust into the atmosphere that the climate was changed worldwide. He goes on to say:

"The contemporary Roman historian Procopius wrote of the climate changes as 'a most dread portent.' In describing the climate that year, Procopius wrote that 'the sun gave forth its light without brightness like the moon during this whole year.' Other accounts of the event say that the sun became 'dim' or 'dark' for up to eighteen months. Its light shone 'like a feeble shadow,' and people were terrified."

Keys cites similar accounts from historical records of Arabia, China, Japan, and other countries, as well as scientific evidence such as analysis of tree-ring growth in northern and western Europe and North America, where "trees virtually stopped growing in the years 536 and 542–43" and did not return to normal until more than twenty years later.

*See also Discourse 73, commentary on Matthew 26:64: "Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven."

sciousness, a gathering of the manifested presence of liberated souls (the "elect" or selected) from the four directions, or uttermost corners of the earth, and from distant parts of the astral heaven.*

In this revelation to his disciples, and to any future devotees, Jesus spoke of the science of yoga. "Look up and lift up your heads": When devotees will have looked up into the spiritual eye and lifted the consciousness to the cerebral throne of light (*sahasrara* or thousand-rayed lotus of life and light in the brain, which shines like a thousand suns in its power and glory) they could behold, through the manifestation of the above-mentioned visions, some materialised form of Christ Consciousness, and perhaps see liberated souls as angels in the astral world. Then such devotees would know that they were spiritually advanced enough to be redeemed soon from earthly miseries and reincarnations —"your redemption draweth nigh"—to become lodged in the sorrowless, fear-free, ever-new joyous state of Cosmic Consciousness.

This veiled promise given by Jesus has created great misunderstanding among many Christian sects. These firmly believe that God will literally produce Jesus out of the clouds in the sky in a glorious display and with His power will destroy the "wicked" (non-conforming) people of the earth and give redemption to selected worshippers. Jesus said, "This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled." Yet, twenty centuries have passed, and Jesus has not yet come out of the clouds openly before the different nations, "tribes." Many true devotees throughout the ages, however, have in ecstatic states of devout meditation seen Jesus coming out of the clouds of darkness of their closed eyes, resplendent in great power and glory. Saint Francis,

Jesus will not come out of the clouds to punish the wicked and rule a kingdom on earth

* All personalized reflections of God are individualizations of His one omnipresent Christ Intelligence, referred to in the scriptures of India as *Kutastha Chaitanya*, the ubiquitous Universal Consciousness of Spirit. The angels and archangels (the Biblical Gabriel, Michael, etc.), the Hindu trinity of Brahma-Vishnu-Shiva (representing creation, preservation, dissolution) and other deities (depictions of God's qualities and creative forces), and liberated masters at one with formless Spirit or serving souls in the supernal astral or causal regions, as also avatars who at God's behest incarnate for a time on earth as God's messengers to man and then return to the Cosmic Consciousness of Spirit or dwell as saviours in the highest heavenly realms—all can become manifest to the advanced devotee. In vision, they are informed by the Cosmic Vibration from the one Christ-*Kutastha* Intelligence that is the Essence of their being—as in the present verse wherein Jesus promises such an appearance of himself.

who saw Jesus many times and talked with him in the woods of Assisi, testifies to all mankind by his own experience—as have other saints—the fulfilment of the prophecy of Jesus that devotees of any clime or time who transmute material pursuits into spiritual advancement will witness Jesus Christ, and angels and liberated souls, in their visions. But it is a sadly futile wait for those who expect at some future time for Jesus to come out of the clouds to establish and rule an ideal kingdom in this world (or for that matter, to take only a select few from earth to such a kingdom patterned after a glorified earth in heaven).

Jesus reigns everlastingly in God's kingdom of Infinity, redeeming souls who look to him for help in making their way to God. It is an absurd proposition—not least, a selfishly unkind one—to want the infinite consciousness in Jesus to be confined forever in a limited form to rule a kingdom on earth (or in heaven) of a chosen few from the multitudes of God's children, the masses of which (even perhaps one's own beloved kin) would perforce forever thereafter exist in torment in perdition. That would not be an act of the Almighty God I know whose love has filled my heart, nor the judgment of the exquisitely compassionate Jesus who forgave and blessed those who had fallen into sin.

From his home in Infinity, Jesus observes with omnipresent awareness, along with other of God's angels and liberated masters, the affairs of man and the ordered destiny of the cosmic drama. The presence of Jesus and the Great Ones in the immanent Christ Consciousness responds to any outreach of man's heart, and maintains a constant pull toward God in the tug-of-war with the outgoing influence of satanic power. Redemption is nigh at any time for those who loosen their souls from the bonds of *maya* and absorb their consciousness in the uplifting power of divine intercession and God's grace.

How devotees can recognise the signs of approaching liberation

To illustrate how the devotee recognises the signs of the unfoldment of Self-realization, Jesus spoke of the young leaves of the fig tree that appear as a certainty of summer's approach. So, likewise, a disciple or true devotee who sees through the awakened spiritual eye any materialised vision of Christ or of liberated souls or of some manifested attribute of the Infinite can then know through pure intuition that the tree of his salvation has put forth tender branches of realization and leaves of divine perception, and that the summer of his final liberation is near at hand.

Jesus foresaw that even his contemporary generation would not pass away before some had begun to experience these signs of approaching liberation through his teachings. But to emphasize that his message was for all time, he affirmed that the truth of his words as a path to salvation—being the reflection of Cosmic Consciousness—would outlast even the dissolution of earth and astral worlds. Truth, and its manifest expression of wisdom, are changeless and eternal; creation and its forces are subject to change and extinguishment. The words of Jesus embody eternal truth and hence they will abide to outlive the presumptuous perdurability of all created things.

When Jesus said of the signs of the advent of liberation: "But of that day and hour knoweth no man, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only," he was praising the singular grandeur of Almighty God who alone can know certain things, concealed even from His greatest devotees. God is the sole Knower unrestricted by the consequential relativities of time and space, cause and effect; everything is revealed in His consciousness of the Eternal Now, while even the angels have a conditional existence and overview in their purpose of serving the universal order through cosmic law. As has been explained, the time of liberation of an individual is entirely problematic, dependent upon the use of one's free will and subject to the acquired spiritual merits and the degree and depth of the devotion with which one imbues one's efforts. Therefore, since the devotee himself determines the day and hour of liberation, according to his spiritual ardour and quality of meditation, which can quicken it or delay it, only the Cosmic Consciousness within Itself knows and can foretell that auspicious moment. Liberated souls, however, who can say with Jesus, "I and my Father are one," can thereby realize in a transcendent state the omniscience of God's Cosmic Consciousness; but this knowing is not always immediately relatable to the here and now of a tedious cause-and-effect cosmos of conditional perspective.

"Take heed therefore, continuously pray, meditate, and watch the tricks of the fickle mind to see if it is centred on God or not; for you know not when trials and delusions will overtake you and test you as to whether you are qualifying for liberation."

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"But as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they

were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be" (Matthew 24:37–39).

Parallel reference:

"And as it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all.

"Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; but the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed.

"In that day, he which shall be upon the house top, and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it away: and he that is in the field let him likewise not return back. Remember Lot's wife.

"Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it: and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it" (Luke 17:26–33).

66 Even as people rejected Noah's warning and unconcernedly went about their commonplace preoccupation with eating, drinking, and marriage festivities, so will this ignorance-drunk generation reject me. Those who disdained Noah did not realize their mistake until they were inundated by the deluge, while Noah floated safely away oh the crest of the flood; so also this careless generation will not realize the consequences of its wickedness until I depart, taken up in the divine ark of Cosmic Consciousness. With the disappearance of Noah, the people's only means of safety was gone; so with my disappearance the wicked people of this generation will have lost the opportunity for the quickening of their salvation through the direct intercession of my physical presence among them (the coming of the Son of man), and they will instead be swept away by the flood of ignorance."

"As in the days of Noah": the sorry fate of the spiritually heedless

As in Noah's day, so ordinary people today let themselves be engulfed by the flood of delusion; they refuse an opportunity to be saved

by entering the ark of meditation designed according to a proven formula of techniques designated by a true guru who is a saviour of souls. As Noah was divinely guided to carry with him a multitude of worthwhile animals and the dove of peace—and all on the ark were thereafter saved by the Lord—so must the devotee carry into his ark of meditation all his precious perceptions and earthly experiences and the dove of aspiration to be transported to the safety of Self-realization.

"Similarly in the days of Lot, the people heedlessly ate, drank, bought, sold, planted, and built; but the same day that the Lord guided Lot and his family out of Sodom, it rained fire and meteors from heaven and destroyed the city and all its inhabitants.* Even thus shall it be on the day that my body (the Son of man) shall be taken out of the earth and revealed in heaven. The fire of ignorance and brimstone of misery will befall those who led materialistic lives during the time when I preached the kingdom of God.

"In the aftermath of my departure, those advanced disciples who have lifted their consciousness above the bodily house, let them not come down from Cosmic Consciousness to reidentify themselves with enjoyment of bodily pleasures. Let him who has been roaming in the fields of God-communion in Cosmic Consciousness not turn back to identification with material consciousness when my voice of spiritual warning will be hushed in silence. Remember Lot's wife, who was somewhat spiritually advanced and was fleeing from the fire of ignorance and the brimstone of misery: When she turned back and put her attention on bodily sensations and desires, her spiritual life was turned into stone, completely destroyed.†

"Whosoever shall be persistently concentrated on saving and protecting his physical life shall lose it in the forgetfulness of death and in the fogs of reincarnations; but whosoever shall give up his life to the search for God in meditation will find the consciousness of his mortal life prolonged and preserved into the everlastingness of the soul's eternal life."

Jesus warns that anyone who is overly solicitous of the temporary manifestation of physical life will lose sight of the infinite life behind it. On the contrary, whosoever is prepared to sacrifice everything of an obstructive delusive nature in his physical life in order to gain

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* Genesis 19:24–25.

† Genesis 19:26.

realization of the Infinite will find human life changed into eternal life.*

"Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come" (Matthew 24:40–42).

Parallel reference:

"I tell you, in that night there shall be two men in one bed; the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left. Two women shall be grinding together; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two men shall be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left."

And they answered and said unto him, "Where, Lord?"

And he said unto them, "Wheresoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together" (Luke 17:34–37).

When Jesus spoke of two being in the field, and one being taken, the other left, he referred to the commonality of human beings—perhaps outwardly of comparable vocations and general countenance, whereas inwardly similarities give way to uniqueness, differing according to the quality of their inner life and thoughts. One person may be a great devotee of God and the other, very material. God bestows salvation (Self-realization) upon people not according to any outward condition or attainment, but commensurate with their inner spiritual qualifications.

The truth about how each individual's karma and desires determine after-death fate

Hence, out of two working in the field, or at the mill, the virtuous would be taken into heaven (saved, or freed from reincarnating), and the materially minded would be left on earth, lifetime after lifetime, until he had worked out his karmic bondage. Therefore, Jesus pointed out

* See also Discourse 41, commentary on Matthew 10:39; Discourse 45, commentary on Matthew 16:25; and Discourse 66, commentary on John 12:25—verses in which this statement of Jesus is repeated.

that since God's subtle law of karma decrees just judgment on people without being influenced by their social status or earthly acclaim, but as to what they are within their real selves and as to their accrued mental tendencies, it is up to the earnest devotee to meditate and be vigilant about the divine character of his inner consciousness. The spiritual aspirant must continuously ward off the invasion of delusions as he awaits the hour when Cosmic Consciousness and Christ Consciousness will visit him—"when your Lord doth come"—to offer final liberation.

In Luke, when Jesus said "one shall be taken and the other left," the disciples enquired, "Where, Lord?" and Jesus replied: "Whereso-ever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together." The verses in this context convey a further metaphysical truth:

"In that night—when the night of confusion and karmic dissolution will come (when one's day of earthly activities is karmically dissolved in the bewildering mystery of the nighttime of death)—then of two souls sleeping on one bed, at rest in the after-death state in the astral world, the virtuous one will be taken toward liberation, and the unvirtuous left behind ready to reincarnate again on earth. Of the souls of two women in the after-death state who were striving to work out their karma, the successful one will be liberated, and the one of inferior accomplishment left to reincarnate on earth to continue to work out her karma on the earth plane. And of two devotees roaming in the field of meditative divine communion after death, the advanced one will be taken into Cosmic Consciousness, and the other left to reincarnate for further spiritual endeavour on earth.

"Wherever the soul is encased—in the physical body or in the astral body or in the causal body—there the eagles of desires will gather to keep the soul a prisoner."

A soul, being invisible, can only be distinguished by the presence of its body, whose existence is made possible by desires, the cohesive force of the three bodies.

If salt water is encased in a jar, and that jar sealed within a second jar, and the two sealed within a third jar and immersed in the ocean, the imprisoned salt water, though within the ocean, cannot contact it.

If the outer jar is broken, still the salt water cannot contact the ocean water. Only when the two other jars are broken also, can the salt water, freed from its containers, become one with the sea.

The soul (individualized Spirit) is similarly encased and imprisoned in three bodies, existing one within the other. The soul is enveloped in

the causal body, a matrix of thirty-five elemental ideas of consciousness, which in turn is encased by the astral body of nineteen elements, which itself is surrounded by the physical body of sixteen elements.*

In earthly life, when one's will is broken by trauma that severs the desire to live, death comes. The soul, however, remains encased in the astral and causal bodies, which are held together by the power of unfulfilled physical desires.

The soul must work out all physical, astral, and causal desires in order to break the limitations that keep it imprisoned. Only then can the soul mingle with the eternal Spirit.

Thus Jesus signified, in reply to the enquiry of the disciples, that the location of a soul can be known according to the presence of its bodies. Invisible souls can be distinguished, as to whether they are in the physical, astral, causal, or in the cosmos, according to their encasements in the three little bodies or the great cosmic body. Where there is a gathering of the eagles of physical desires, the soul is evidenced in a physical body. Where there is a gathering of the eagles of astral desires, a soul will be found wearing an astral body. The presence of a causal body signifies a soul tenuously imprisoned therein under the influence of the eagles of causal desires.

When the soul is liberated from its three small limiting bodies, it becomes united to its omnipresent cosmic body, where the eagles of noble perception soar high in the infinitude of Cosmic Consciousness. Whereas the three little bodies are held together by their distinguishing physical, astral, and causal desires, the cosmic body of infinitude is manifest in the Divine Will.

The eagles of desires are both material and spiritual. So Jesus signified that the eagles of physical desires gather around the physical body to feast on sensory temptations. The eagles of desires in the astral body thrive on finer astral sensations. Everything is enjoyed as wondrously changing and manipulatable forms of light and vibration. Astral beings see, hear, smell, taste, and touch all forms of astral creation as mutable vibratory light.

The eagles of causal desires consist of enjoying everything by exquisitely keen perceptions of pure consciousness only. Souls encased only in the causal body know the whole of creation to be materialised dream ideas of God. Souls awake in the causal body can materialise

* See Discourse 6.

anything they desire in thought forms more "real" than any physical sensation or astral perception, which are grossly dull and stifling to the soul's fine causal sensibilities. Souls encased in the thin veil of the causal body work out their desires by manifesting them into dreams or condensed imagination, even as the Heavenly Father holds into being all creation as a cosmic dream.

As man transcends physical desires and progresses to the finer consciousness of astral and causal desires, he is endowed with a deeper realization of reality in his mastery of materialising anything in terms of astral light or in terms of condensed thoughts or dreams. He feels less tempted and bound by astral perceptions or the even finer causal perceptions than one experiences when attacked by the gross physical temptations endemic in the denser vibrations of material delusion.

When the soul has overcome all desires and leaves the imprisonment of the three bodies, the eagles of superconscious perceptions soar in the Infinite in the soul's cosmic body, one with the cosmic-bodied Spirit.*

"Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were wise, and five were foolish. They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept.

"And at midnight there was a cry made, 'Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him.' Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said unto the

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* The above abbreviated commentary on the afterlife of the soul in its astral and causal bodies, as relative in this context to the words of Jesus, is elaborated in *Autobiography of a Yogi,* Chapter 43, "The Resurrection of Sri Yukteswar." There, Paramahansaji recounts in full the awe-inspiring revelations of the mysteries of life after death received through his guru, who appeared after his death in resurrected form. Paramahansaji related that during this experience, "My mind was now in such perfect attunement with my guru's that he was conveying his word-pictures to me partly by speech and partly by thought transference. I was thus quickly receiving his idea-tabloids....Never from song or story had I ever received such inspiring knowledge. Though the Hindu scriptures refer to the causal and astral worlds and to man's three bodies, how remote and meaningless those pages compared with the warm authenticity of my resurrected Master!" *(Publisher's Note)*

wise, 'Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out.' But the wise answered, saying, 'Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves.'

*"And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut. Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, 'Lord, Lord, open to us.' But he answered and said, 'Verily I say unto you, I know you not.' Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh" (Matthew 25:1–13).**

Parable of the wise and foolish virgins: the need for continuous spiritual zeal

Continuing to exhort the disciples to be ready for the coming of the Son of man—for when the manifested Christ Consciousness will come to uplift them into final liberation in Cosmic Consciousness—Jesus related the following metaphorical parable:

The kingdom of heaven was craved by ten renunciants who, in meditation, had once lit the lamps of their consciousness with the light of Self-realization and had gone forth in expectation to meet the bridegroom of Christ Consciousness.† Five of these celibates were wise in their preparation, while the other five were foolish in spiritual negligence. Those who were foolish had started well with their lamps of Self-realization, but they had been careless in their efforts to assure adequate oil of devotion and regularity in meditation in order to keep their lights burning indefinitely. The wise devotees had secured within their hearts enough oil of spiritual enthusiasm and deep regular meditation to keep steadily aflame their lamps of wisdom.

When the bridegroom of Christ Consciousness delayed manifesting itself in the ten devotees, they all "slumbered and slept," remained for awhile in partial delusion, unconscious of the hiatus in their

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* The parable of the ten virgins has its basis in the tradition of the Eastern marriage customs of the Jews, in which virgins served as attendants, or bridesmaids. Recounting one such instance, the Book of Psalms records that the bride "is all glorious within: her clothing is of wrought gold. She shall be brought unto the king in raiment of needlework: the virgins her companions that follow her shall be brought unto thee [the king, or bridegroom]. With gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought: they shall enter into the king's palace" (Psalms 45:13–15).

† See Discourses 16 and 32 for discussion of metaphysical significance of Christ Consciousness as "the Bridegroom."

progress. But at the middle state—when they had moved partway toward the dawn of divine attainment—there was a vibration from within their souls that signified the approach of the bridegroom, the manifestation of Christ Consciousness, and that they must lift the light of their consciousness to meet him.

The prepared celibates lifted their lighted lamps of Self-realization, but the five foolish devotees remained in darkness. Then they requested of the wise ones, "Please give to us some of the oil of your devotion and vibrations of good habits, for the light of our Self-realization has gone out for lack of continuous spiritual enthusiasm."

But the wise renunciants answered, "It cannot be done. The oil of devotion cannot be transferred. This precious fuel cannot be obtained unless you yourself acquire it by your daily spiritual practices."

So while the unprepared devotees were busy trying to attain the necessary devotion to reillumine their darkened lamps of Self-realization, the bridegroom of Christ Consciousness manifested in the consciousness of the five devoted celibates who were prepared and able to follow him to the realm of Spirit. There within their own consciousness they witnessed and participated in the uniting of the Christ Consciousness to Cosmic Consciousness, forever wedded to the Blissful Absolute.

And then the door of divine manifestation was closed for awhile, so that when the five foolish devotees—trying to relight their delusion-extinguished devotion—prayed: "Lord Christ Consciousness, manifest yourself in our consciousness," the inner voice replied, "Verily, you are not yet ready to know (contact) the Christ Consciousness within you."

Lest any sincere aspirants be found wanting, it behoves them to meditate deeply and devoutly to keep the intuitive inner consciousness always watchful and prepared for the unknown day or hour when the Son of man, the manifestation of Christ Consciousness, will manifest to them.

When Jesus related this parable of the ten virgins, it was to emphasize that even austere celibate renunciants cannot receive God with only a momentary illumination in their lamp of Self-realization; they must also have the oil of devotion and constant meditation and spiritual zeal to keep the inspiration of Self-realization continuously burning. All who maintain the steady flame of spiritual ardour will surely be ready and able to receive the Divine One when unexpectedly He enters the inner chamber of consciousness perpetually lighted by the devotion of the heart and the wisdom of Self-realization.

DISCOURSE 68

What Jesus Meant by "Everlasting Punishment"

The True "Day of Judgment" for the Righteous as Well as the Evildoers

❖

Serving the Christ Spirit in the Hungry, the Sick, and the Destitute

❖

Selfish Unsympathetic Persons Cannot Remain in the Astral Heaven of Beauty and Freedom

❖

God Is Not a Merciless Judge Who Condemns Souls to "Everlasting Fire".

❖

Man Decrees His Own Punishment When He Accedes to the Evil Influence of Satanic Delusion

❖

All God's Children Are Given Unending Opportunities to Find Salvation

"Even aeons of ignorance and wrong actions could not change the eternal soul's intrinsic divine nature....Since the soul is an emanation of God's own Being, it is manifestly impossible for man's true Self to be degraded into an evil entity meriting everlasting damnation."

"When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.

"Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, 'Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.'

"Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, 'Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?' And the King shall answer and say unto them, 'Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.'

"Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, 'Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not.'

"Then shall they also answer him, saying, 'Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee?' Then shall he answer them, saying, 'Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me.' And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal."

—Matthew 25:31–46

DISCOURSE 68

What Jesus Meant by "Everlasting Punishment"

"When the Son of man (this incarnation called Jesus) shall be glorified in heaven by mergence in Cosmic Consciousness with all the holy angelic liberated souls, my everlasting Christ Consciousness shall be enthroned in the glory of Omnipresence, at one with the Infinite Christ Intelligence that is the witness and supreme judge of all persons of all nations.* When souls leave the earth at death, they are arraigned before that Infinite Intelligence, which will ordain through cosmic law that those who have humbly followed the ways of virtue, the 'sheep,' be kept in the fold of righteousness in heaven's bliss; and that all the scapegoats who bear the sins of many incarnations,† evildoers, be consigned to lower regions of the astral world, thence to reincarnate on earth to continue working out the effects of their wrong actions."

The true "day of judgment" for the righteous as well as the evildoers

* See similar words of Jesus in Matthew 19:28 [Discourse 63]: "...in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory...." That is, "after the resurrection of the Son of man (the spiritualization of my physical body into cosmic Spirit), my Christ Consciousness will rest on the throne of omnipresent Cosmic Consciousness in the kingdom of Christ Consciousness."

† Scapegoat: "an animal or person to whom sins, ill luck, or other evils are ceremonially attached and who symbolically bears them away by being sacrificed or exiled" (*Webster's Third New International Dictionary,* Unabridged).

These verses are commonly interpreted as describing the "last judgment" purportedly to be pronounced upon the masses at the time of the "second coming" of Jesus predicted by church belief. As earlier explained [Discourse 34], the "day of judgment" is not a cosmic event decreed by God to occur at some specific future time. Rather, it takes place for all individuals after each one's death when they arise in the astral world. The Christ Consciousness discerns their accumulated good and evil karma, and the cosmic law of cause and effect emanating from that Universal Intelligence sorts them according to the next-life destination earned by their meritorious or reprehensible deeds.* Eminently virtuous ones are elevated to higher celestial realms, or are liberated by being lifted into Cosmic Consciousness; the others, because of their material desires and lingering imperfections created by past wrong actions, are reborn into variously good or bad families and environments on earth,† a place of perpetual delusion of insatiable desires and continuous punishment from the effects of proliferating evil karma—a torture of constantly burning fires of misery.‡

Jesus had said before in similar words but with a different emphasis: "For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with His angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works."§ On a personal spiritual level Jesus was citing the experience of the advanced devotee in meditation whose soul is uplifted to God-perception. That devotee realizes God's infinite Christ-*Kutastha* Intelligence with its judgment of the cosmic law of cause and effect reflected right within his own Son-of-man soul consciousness. From the devotee's divine "works" of persistence in devout meditation, he receives the

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* See commentary, Discourse 21, regarding the after-death judgment by the Infinite Christ Consciousness and Cosmic Law.

† "A man who dies with *sattva* [elevating] qualities predominant rises to the taintless regions in which dwell knowers of the Highest. When *rajas* [the activating quality of nature] prevails at the time of death, a person is reborn among those attached to activity. He who dies permeated with *tamas* [degrading quality] enters the wombs (environment, family, state of existence) of the deeply deluded" (*God Talks With Arjuna: The Bhagavad Gita* XIV:14–15).

‡ See also Discourse 48, commentary on Matthew 18:8–9 and Mark 9:43: "And if thy hand [or foot or eye—any instrument of sense temptation] offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched."

§ Matthew 16:27 (see Discourse 45).

reward of his spiritual endeavours when the glory of the Cosmic Consciousness of the Father with its angelic joys and wisdom are revealed to the Son of man, the soul consciousness dwelling within his body.

The consciousness of most individuals is far removed from the inner revelations of such ecstatic states of realization. However, even body-bound persons experience a superconscious perception during the body-transcendent "ecstasy" of death: When the life force and consciousness are withdrawn into the spine and brain to exit the body, the superconsciousness of the soul—the reflection of Christ Consciousness in the body ("the Son of man")—perceives in a flash all the "works," karma-producing actions, performed during that person's lifetime. The overall connotation of those works activates the cosmic law of karma to decree the next phase of existence for that soul.* This is a universal human experience, applicable to "all nations," as stated by Jesus in the present verses (Matthew 25:31–32), irrespective of race or religious belief.

In his many parables, Jesus spoke metaphorically of requisites for a devotee's salvation—including faithfulness in regular meditation for spiritual development; devotion; constancy in governing the senses, habits, and material desires. In these present verses, he explains further as to why virtue-illumined souls are liberated and evil-besmirched souls are sent back to earth: Liberation can come to a spiritual seeker only when he realizes the presence of Christ Consciousness within himself, and when by expanded realization he honours that Christ Spirit in others.

Serving the Christ Spirit in the hungry, the sick, and the destitute

Virtuous devotees—those who are truly successful in meditation—not only behold Christ Consciousness within their own souls, but know also that it is equally present in all others. That is why, after serving Christ with devotion in the temple of meditation, they go on with a willing spontaneity to serve the Christ Spirit in the hungry, thirsty, forlorn, poor, sick, and imprisoned sufferers of the world. At the end of their earthly sojourn, when they are separated from those who must reincarnate on earth, Christ Consciousness, the King of all creation, will vibrate the command to them through cosmic law:

"Come, all you virtuous souls on My right hand, enthroned in righteousness and blessed with Cosmic Consciousness! Inherit the

* See also discussion of "Gabriel's trumpet," Discourse 21.

kingdom of eternal bliss which has been intended for you from the very inception of the cosmos. When I, Christ Intelligence, was present in the souls of the hungry, you gave Me food. When I was thirsty in earthly bodies, you gave Me drink. You took Me in though I appeared a stranger, My divinity hidden in a poor human mould. When you clothed the destitute, it was I who received your care. When you visited the sick, you ministered unto Me indwelling in them. When I was present in the bodies of prisoners who were confined and hopeless, you came to cheer Me. Since My presence inheres in all earthly brethren—the greatest and the least—whenever you offered physical, mental, or spiritual help to any of them, you actually served Me. Being consciously present in all children of My Father, I am mindful of every act of beneficence they received from you. By loving Me in My every-form, you are everlastingly in My eternal love and eternal protection!"

Selfish unsympathetic persons cannot remain in the astral heaven of beauty and freedom

Then Jesus speaks of those persons who never meditate and thus are oblivious of the presence of Christ within themselves. Consequently, neither do they realize the Christ Spirit present in the hungry, the thirsty, and all other burdened, trial-ridden human beings. He declares that such ignorant and unsympathetic persons, when they escape from the body prison at death, find no lasting place for themselves in the astral spheres of celestial beauty and freedom. The Christ Intelligence through cosmic law vibrates its decree to them wordlessly, but it might be verbally expressed as follows:

"Depart from my presence revealed to the righteous in the astral world, all of you on my left who are separated out and cursed by your own actions to burn in the interminable fire of worldly desires—created when dark devilish mentalities as well as angel-bright intellectuals succumb to the ignorance imposed by 'the devil and his angels.' Though the Christ Intelligence is equally present in you and all your great and insignificant earthly brother-beings, you neither realized your own soul potential nor rendered help to that Presence in those who were in need. A deluded, selfish life is a wicked life. Now you will have to return to earth;* there is no heavenly kingdom nor liberation

* Before one reincarnates on earth, karmic compensation may also be partially meted out through suffering mentally the fiery pangs of unrequited material cravings during a temporary stay in one of the lower astral regions, as in the example of the rich man cited in Luke 16:1–31 (Discourse 59).

in Spirit for you until you have neutralized your past bad karma with the antidote of realizing the Eternal Life and Consciousness within you and serving that Divine Presence in all."

The references in these verses to "everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels"—a place of "everlasting punishment"—have created in the minds of millions a fear of the Divine as a merciless Judge who would condemn His children to damnation for all eternity in the torturous sufferings of hell, without possibility of relief. But Jesus never meant that there is a special region where souls after death agonize in an eternity of imprisonment and punishment for the mixed transgressions and virtues of one life consisting of a few dozen years. Such a concept is totally illogical! Even an earthly judge has sense enough to sentence a criminal according to the nature and degree of his crime. Certainly the impartially righteous Judge of judges, the Cosmic Law, ordains rewards or punishments commensurate with one's karmic behaviour on the earth plane. A million years of persistent sin could attract a million years of vile incarnations, no more. But even aeons of ignorance and wrong actions could not change the eternal soul's intrinsic divine nature. Man may sport in the misuse of his free will for a time and wear the pseudomoniker of a mortal, but that temporary delusion can never erase the mark of immortality and perfection of God's image imprinted on his soul. Since the soul is an emanation of God's own Being, it is manifestly impossible for man's true Self to be degraded into an evil entity meriting everlasting damnation.

God is not a merciless Judge who condemns souls to "everlasting fire"

Once, near Seattle, Washington, I had been sitting by the ocean, whose vastness engulfed my mind in thoughts of God. After a time I felt hungry, and went to a nearby farmhouse to buy some cherries. Here I met an elderly man with rosy cheeks. He had a cheerful countenance, and showed me warm hospitality.

But a divine impulse came over me and I said, "Dear sir, though you look very happy, there is a hidden suffering in your life."

He enquired, "Are you a fortune-teller?"

I answered, "No; but I tell people how to mend their fortunes."

The conversation shifted to spiritual matters. To my surprise, the man suddenly cried out, "We are all sinners! The Lord will burn our souls in hellfire and brimstone." I appealed to his common sense. "How," I asked him, "could a man who at death loses his body and

becomes an invisible soul be burned in a fire created by material brimstone?"

The man became angry. He kept insisting, "It's true. We shall all burn in hellfire." Then I enquired cajolingly, "Did you receive a radiogram from God about this matter, that you are so certain He will burn us in hellfire?"

"Blasphemy!" the old man cried, more excited than ever.

I then spoke soothingly, and quietly changed the subject. Presently I asked him, "What about your unhappiness over that wicked son of yours?" My host was astonished at my words and admitted that he experienced a constant sorrow over a wastrel son whom he seemed to be helpless to correct.

"I have a remedy for your misery," I said. Now the man's eyes gleamed with hope, and he smiled.

"If you can do anything for me—*anything,*" he said, "I shall be grateful to you for the rest of my life."

With a mysterious air, as if about to reveal a precious secret, I asked him in a low voice, "Have you a stove with a large oven?" With my hands I described the dimensions I wanted.

He replied, wonderingly, "Why, yes."

"Good," I said. "I shall ask you to heat it red-hot. Now, have you two friends whom you can trust never to betray your secrets to anyone, no matter what you do?"

"Why, yes, but—"

"Good!" I interrupted him. "You'll need their help. Now, have you several yards of strong rope?"

"Yes, I have," the old farmer replied, with mounting suspicion. "But why am I going to need that?"

"Please be calm, dear friend. Didn't I promise you I would give you a remedy for your troubles?" Hopefully but cautiously the man dismissed his misgivings and listened to what more I had to say. I then asked him casually, "Your son is quite a heavy sleeper, isn't he?"

"Yes," came the sorrowful reply. "He comes home so full of liquor."

"Excellent!" I cried, in a tone of exultation. "Now then, tonight I want you to call your two friends over. Heat your oven as hot as possible. Keep your friends quiet until your son is sound asleep. Then slip quickly into his room, bind him securely, carry him downstairs and shove him into the oven!"

"Fiend! Murderer!" the old man shouted, shaking his fist at me. "Is that your remedy?"

"Isn't that what your son deserves?" I asked. "Just think, you will never be troubled by him again."

"This is outrageous!" cried the man. "Whoever heard of a father burning his son? I wouldn't do such a terrible thing even if my boy were ten times as wicked as he is!"

"Of course you wouldn't!" I replied sternly. The man looked at me quizzically, taken aback at the new trend of my words. "Now," I continued, "think what I have been trying to tell you. You, who are human and far from the perfection of God, cannot bear to inflict torture on your son, no matter how evil he may be. Where did you acquire this instinct of love, if not from your Heavenly Father? Even a human father could not abide the cruel thought of punishing an erring son by roasting him alive. How, then, can you think of your supremely loving Heavenly Father as one who burns His own children in eternal hellfire and brimstone? God's love is infinitely greater than your fatherly affection!"

The gentleman's eyes filled with tears of understanding. With new tenderness, he looked at me gratefully and said, "Of course—I have always thought of our Heavenly Father as a God of love. He would not punish us forever for our ignorance."

I concluded, "We alone punish or reward ourselves here on earth by the effects of our own actions."

When a man works evil, the seed tendencies of his sinful actions become lodged in the deep recesses of his consciousness, ready to germinate in the soil of favourable circumstances, and thence to sprout into evil habits in the present or a future incarnation. Once evil tendencies become evil habits, they compel one to more evil actions. In this way, a sinner creates for himself an endless hell of generative, compulsive tendencies that drive him to desperate depths of evil. He experiences in this cycle of torment what is meant by eternal damnation.

Man decrees his own punishment when he accedes to the evil influence of satanic delusion

Temptation to perform ignoble acts arises in man's consciousness through cosmic delusion, the influence of Satan and his agents of evil: anger, lust, greed, selfishness, and the myriad other enemies of godliness. By choosing to accede to malevolent promptings, man allows the devil a place in his life—the more heinous the act, the greater

the inroads made by satanic forces. Subtly ensconced in the ignorance that enshrouds man's soul, they stimulate ever-increasing evils of delusion and stoke the constantly burning fires of material craving in all unenlightened minds. Thus the Christ-imbued cosmic law's after-death decree of reincarnation on earth for the evil-obsessed: "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels"—Satan and his agents and those mentalities, good as well as bad, they hold in the ignorance of delusion.

Under human law a murderer, when apprehended, may be executed; but he goes free if his guilt is undetected. No such escape is possible under the all-seeing cosmic law; from the very time the crime is committed, that evil couches itself in the perpetrator's consciousness as a cause-effect imprint that foreshadows an inevitable justice. This is not to say that the killer will necessarily be killed by some other individual; the divine law does not write its verdicts according to the tit-for-tat policy, "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth." Instead, the murderer begins to punish himself continuously, through conscience and a subconsciously present inner terror of the consequences for failure to act according to the law: "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." He is haunted, perhaps only with searing subconscious effect, with the burning mental horror of the physical pain and loss of life he inflicted on his victim, now turned inward as applicable to himself. If he does not free himself by repentance and spiritual reformation in meditation, prayer, and God-communion, or at least satisfy his conscience by giving himself up unto the law, then, even if he goes scot-free in that incarnation, in his next life he will carry within his consciousness a karmic bomb of murder tendency, as well as a subconscious fear of being victimized himself. Under the influence of anger or other violent emotion, that habit bomb might explode into another sudden homicidal impulse, wherein he, in turn, might be slain. The circumstance of his death would not be decreed by the cosmic law for his past crime. Rather, the murderer would have attracted that death unto himself by his own wrong actions born of stored-up tendencies from the past.

All God's children are given unending opportunities to find salvation

A person with a deep-seated bad habit—the inveterate smoker, the drunkard, the drug addict, the palate slave, the sex addict, the servant of anger, jealousy—feels so helplessly caught in the tentacles of his diabolical habit that he fears

himself doomed to perform those untoward actions and to reap their painful results despite any desire to reform. However, it is only that sinner's surrender to a sense of helplessness that condemns him to remain under the damning influence of "the devil and his angels."

There is no sinful habit, however strong, that cannot be broken by good company, meditation, and continuous effort to adopt the counteracting transmuting power of an opposite good habit. A person with pernicious habits tends to forget that that mind-set was formed through repeated performance of wrong actions. Thus, even if former evildoers are very willing to be good, they should not expect that by one or a few good efforts they can be free from their past. But if they persist in right behaviour and shun evil company and evil thoughts, which stimulate evil actions, they will certainly in time replace iniquitous habits with virtues.

All erring children of God are given as many incarnations on earth as they need to work out their karma, until they become liberated by realizing and manifesting the perfect image of God within them. But instead of using their lifetimes to seek salvation, they create and feed the singeing fires of continuous earthly desires that keep the soul on designated rounds of incarnations on earth, a place of everlasting, or at least continuous, misery due to the constant presence of cosmic delusion. In that sense, the words "everlasting punishment" do describe earth. If man recalled all the sorrows and sufferings of his countless past lifetimes, he would know he has already endured the fires of hell and that now is the time to seek the everlasting heaven in God.

If, however, the errors of one or many lifetimes are insufficient to warrant eternal damnation, how can virtuous actions of one or more incarnations merit eternal liberation? The answer lies in the immutable perfection of man's soul, which becomes only temporarily identified with a mortal body. So long as a person thinks he is mortal, so long must he suffer the taunting challenges of the dualities of mortal existence. The delusion of mortal consciousness may distort the outer expression of the soul for a few or many incarnations; but sooner or later, through self-effort and evolutionary law imbued with God's uplifting grace, the soul regains its expression of wisdom.

All evil is only a temporary graft on the immutable perfection of the soul

All evil accruing to man's nature is a passive graft, a transitory parasite on the tree of life, which can be incised with the scalpel of wisdom.

As soon as man realizes that evil promises happiness and results only in unhappiness, he begins to wish for emancipation and starts in earnest his search for God. The desire for goodness and freedom invites God to come into one's life with His guidance and blessings.

By soul-revealing meditation and right action (observing God's moral laws and the exhortations of His emissaries), the devotee progresses surely toward Self-realization—the awakened consciousness of his soul and its oneness with God. Thus illumined, his age-old darkness of mortal ignorance vanishes. He returns to his home of Cosmic Consciousness to be liberated forever by the Father.*

So although the notion of everlasting hellfire and damnation is untenable and should be banished from the superstitious minds of men, the existence of an Eternal Heaven in God is incorruptibly true. At the end of the trail of reincarnations, along which man has been led by his wandering material desires, he will find the blissful Heavenly Father waiting to receive His children into His ever new Joy of "life eternal."

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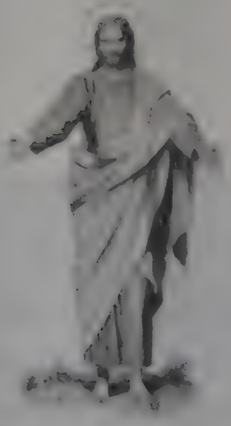
* "One who is united to cosmic wisdom goes beyond the effects of both virtue and vice, even here in this life. Therefore, devote thyself to yoga, divine union. Yoga is the art of proper action.

"Those who have mastered their minds become engrossed in infinite wisdom; they have no further interest in any fruits of actions. Freed thus from the chain of rebirth, they attain the state beyond sorrow" (*God Talks With Arjuna: The Bhagavad Gita* II:50–51).



DISCOURSE 69

"This Do in Remembrance of Me"

The Last Supper, Part I

The Esoteric Significance of Jesus' Sharing the Bread and Cup at the Last Supper

❖

How the Shedding of Jesus' Blood on the Cross Worked for the Remission of Sins

❖

The Real Import of "the New Covenant" and Partaking of the Body and Blood of Christ

❖

The Law of Karma in Relation to Jesus' Crucifixion and the Fate of His Betrayer

❖

Jesus' Practical Wisdom in Applying Spiritual Truths in the World of Relativity

"Those who have true communion with Christ can perceive Jesus not merely in a ritualistic symbolic form, but in his formless infinitude as one with the all-pervading Christ Consciousness and universal light of the Holy Ghost Cosmic Energy."

Then came the day of unleavened bread, when the Passover must be killed. And he sent Peter and John, saying, "Go and prepare us the Passover, that we may eat."

And they said unto him, "Where wilt thou that we prepare?"

And he said unto them, "Behold, when ye are entered into the city, there shall a man meet you, bearing a pitcher of water; follow him into the house where he entereth in. And ye shall say unto the goodman of the house, 'The Master saith unto thee, "Where is the guestchamber, where I shall eat the Passover with my disciples?"' And he shall shew you a large upper room furnished: there make ready."

And they went, and found as he had said unto them: and they made ready the Passover. And when the hour was come, he sat down, and the twelve apostles with him.

And he said unto them, "With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer: For I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God."

And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, "Take this, and divide it among yourselves: For I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come."

And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, "This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me."

Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you.

"But, behold, the hand of him that betrayeth me is with me on the table. And truly the Son of man goeth, as it was determined: but woe unto that man by whom he is betrayed!" And they began to enquire among themselves, which of them it was that should do this thing.

And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest. And he said unto them, "The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefac-

tors. But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve. For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? Is not he that sitteth at meat? But I am among you as he that serveth.

"Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations. And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel."

And the Lord said, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren."

And he said unto him, "Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death."

And he said, "I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me."

And he said unto them, "When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked ye any thing?"

And they said, "Nothing."

Then said he unto them, "But now, he that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise his scrip: and he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one. For I say unto you, that this that is written must yet be accomplished in me, 'And he was reckoned among the transgressors': for the things concerning me have an end."

And they said, "Lord, behold, here are two swords."

And he said unto them, "It is enough."

—Luke 22:7–38

DISCOURSE 69

"This Do in Remembrance of Me"

The Last Supper, Part I

Then came the day of unleavened bread, when the Passover must be killed. And he sent Peter and John, saying, "Go and prepare us the Passover, that we may eat."

And they said unto him, "Where wilt thou that we prepare?"

*And he said unto them, "Behold, when ye are entered into the city, there shall a man meet you, bearing a pitcher of water; follow him into the house where he entereth in. And ye shall say unto the goodman of the house, 'The Master saith unto thee, "Where is the guestchamber, where I shall eat the Passover with my disciples?"' And he shall shew you a large upper room furnished: there make ready" (Luke 22:7–12).**

Jesus repeatedly demonstrated to the disciples, not merely by words, but by actions, his omniscience and omnipresence. The Christ Consciousness in Jesus, at one with the Evolver-Knower of All, was thereby able to perceive with countless eyes in every speck of space—past, present, and future—the sequence of events that would lead Peter and John to a suitable place for Jesus to celebrate his Last Supper with the disciples.

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* Cf. parallel references in Matthew 26:17–18 and Mark 14:12–15.

It is impossible to translate explicitly into human language the state of Jesus' consciousness. It was everywhere; it was everything—present in the thoughts and minds of the disciples, on the road they walked upon to go into the city, in the city itself, in the man with the pitcher, even in the pitcher, and throughout the subtle vibratory ether between his body, the city, and all differentiated forms. Like every God-ordained shepherd of souls, Jesus was attentive not only to the disciples in his immediate presence, but even to distant devotees who were in tune with him and ready to carry out his wishes. He wished to observe the feast of the Passover in the house of an especially devoted disciple, who made available the choice upper room in his home at his Master's request.*

The infinite extent of Jesus' consciousness

It is a custom in India, when great souls prepare to leave this earth, to celebrate with a banquet their release in Spirit. Jesus, too, just before his passing, observed this Oriental custom when he sent Peter and John to prepare, for him and the twelve disciples, not only the traditional Passover but also a last supper.

And they went, and found as he had said unto them: and they made ready the Passover. And when the hour was come, he sat down, and the twelve apostles with him.

And he said unto them, "With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer: For I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God."†

And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, "Take this, and divide it among yourselves: For I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come" (Luke 22:13–18).

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* The Gospel does not identify the man by name. Clearly a man of wealth, owner of a large home with a furnished upper room that he could readily place at Jesus' disposal, it is possible that he was one of a number of prominent disciples who, for social or political reasons, did not openly profess their belief (such as Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea). Jesus intimated to Peter and John that the man would accede to their request without question and without their even mentioning Jesus' name; also, in the Aramaic and Persic manuscripts of the Gospel, "*the* master saith to thee..." is given as "*our* master saith to thee"—another intimation that the man was a brother disciple. *(Publisher's Note)*

† Cf. parallel references in Matthew 26:19–20 and Mark 14:16–17.

Parallel reference:

> *"But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom" (Matthew 26:29).**

"With conscious desire, born of my own free choice, I have desired to act with the sentiment of a human among humans and eat the Passover supper with you as a token of farewell—my last repast on the earth before my body suffers on the cross. For I say unto you, I will not partake of material food again until the prophesied culmination of my life—my crucifixion and resurrection—be fulfilled, and I have entered the kingdom of God, freed completely in Cosmic Consciousness. After I am fully risen in Spirit in the perfection of freedom from all mortal constraints of cosmic law, and I have resurrected my soon-to-be shattered form, then I shall meet you again and we shall eat together as before, in the consciousness of my Father's presence.†

Jesus' touchingly human desire to share a farewell supper with the disciples

"Divide the drink in this cup among yourselves, for I say unto you, I will not drink the juice of the grape until after my crucifixion and resurrection, when, manifesting the Cosmic Consciousness of my Heavenly Father's kingdom, I will come again in flesh and blood and drink with you the fruit of the vine and the wine of wisdom pressed from my fully attained transcendence."

It touches the heart's deepest feelings to know that even though Jesus was divine, he was human, too. He felt the pangs of approaching bodily separation from his beloved disciples, and thus had the poignant desire to eat a farewell meal with them before his great ordeal.

The sharing of a cup of "the fruit of the vine," passed among those attending the Passover feast, was a customary part of the ritual observance. Whether Jesus and the disciples drank wine, or water mingled with wine, or unfermented grape juice,‡ the "cup" he asked his followers to share had a deeper meaning (as explained in the next

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* Cf. additional parallel reference in Mark 14:25.

† See Luke 24:30 and 24:41–43, two occasions on which Jesus ate with his disciples after his resurrection (Discourse 75).

‡ The word *wine* is not used in any of the Gospel accounts of the Last Supper.

The Last Supper: "And He Took the Cup..."

And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is my body."

And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins."

—Matthew 26:26–28

Jesus showed again and again that his "body" was not himself. He was Spirit; he could pass through walls and walk on water because he knew the real substance of his form to be consciousness. So "flesh of Christ" means his consciousness. "Blood" means the life of Christ, the Holy Ghost Cosmic Energy that is the life and the light of his little body called Jesus and his cosmic body of the universe....

Anyone, of any religion or any era, who sees that Sacred Vibratory Light of God and His reflected Christ Consciousness, finds that immediately that Light changes the brain cells. This is the real import of partaking of the blood of Christ. By bathing in that Light, which was and is his manifest life and power, deeply meditating devotees are cleansed in the "blood" of divine energy that cauterizes their ignorance, bad habits, and seed tendencies of past karma.

—Paramahansa Yogananda

Drawing by Heinrich Hofmann

segment of verses). In any case, Jesus and the disciples in the aura of his blessings were in such an advanced state of consciousness that a little wine could have no ill effect on them; they were under the influence only of the wine of ecstasy in the ever new joyous contact with God. Grossly inferior material intoxicants stimulate the senses, obliterate reason, and bring spiritual degradation. Satan invented the temptation of wine and sensual indulgence to delude people with counterfeit substitutes for the infinitely satisfying bliss of God-contact found in deep meditation. Seekers of divine ecstasy are adjured to abstain strictly from inebriating substances and sensual stimulants, which keep the life force and consciousness bound in body consciousness and easily become habit-forming. Sense-enslaved persons who are controlled by habits of wine or sex find themselves unable to partake of the supersensory, supremely intoxicating ecstasy of God-communion.

The contents of the cup offered to the disciples was charged by Jesus with his divine vibrations of Holy Ghost Cosmic Energy, that the disciples might feel an upliftment and purification as they celebrated together the rites of Passover (liberation from bondage).*

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* The Feast of the Passover, one of the principal holy festivals of the Jewish year, commemorates the deliverance of the people from their bondage in Egypt. As recounted in the Book of Exodus, God said to Moses:

"I have also heard the groaning of the children of Israel, whom the Egyptians keep in bondage; and I have remembered My covenant. Wherefore say unto the children of Israel, 'I am the Lord, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will rid you out of their bondage, and I will redeem you with a stretched out arm, and with great judgments: And I will take you to Me for a people, and I will be to you a God: and ye shall know that I am the Lord your God, which bringeth you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians'" (Exodus 6:5–7).

The Biblical account relates that it took ten devastating plagues, prophesied by Moses, to convince the Pharaoh to release the Israelites. The final punishment was the sudden death of the firstborn son of each Egyptian household. God had told Moses to have each Israelite family, on the specified day, prepare a meal of lamb, unleavened bread, and bitter herbs—and to daub the doorway of their homes with the blood of the lamb. "For the Lord will pass through to smite the Egyptians; and when he seeth the blood upon the lintel, and on the two side posts, the Lord will pass over the door, and will not suffer the destroyer to come in unto your houses to smite you.

"And ye shall observe this thing for an ordinance to thee and to thy sons for ever...It is the sacrifice of the Lord's Passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when He smote the Egyptians, and delivered our houses" (Exodus 12:23–24, 27).

> *And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, "This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me."*
>
> *Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you" (Luke 22:19–20).*

Parallel reference:

> *And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is my body."*
>
> *And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matthew 26:26–28).**

Jesus had earlier declared the metaphorical nature of the sacrament of his flesh and blood, so the apostles understood the full esoteric significance of the symbolic "bread" and "cup" offered by Jesus at the Last Supper.† This is implicit as he relates that symbology to his crucifixion and "the new testament."

The esoteric significance of Jesus' sharing the bread and cup at the Last Supper

"As I break this bread and give it to you for your physical nourishment, likewise I offer my little body called Jesus to be broken and crucified, that through the example of my life and my sacrifice your spiritual life can be nourished. So whenever you break bread and give thanks to God and eat, remember my breaking bread for you on the eve of my sacrifice; celebrate it as a symbol of my offering this body for the sake of your spiritual development and that of all humanity.

"In the cup I give to you, receive the new testament sent by God through me for your liberation: His message for which my blood is shed

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* Cf. additional parallel reference in Mark 14:22–25.

† See Discourse 43, commentary on John 6:51–54, wherein Jesus says: "I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh....Whoso eateth my flesh (absorbs in his own consciousness the Christ Consciousness that was fully manifested in Jesus), and drinketh my blood (becomes purified in the light and life of the Holy Ghost Cosmic Vibration), hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day."

for you. It is the spirit of willingness to sacrifice everything, even life itself, for the sake of attaining eternal liberation in God-consciousness. This shall be signified by my crucifixion. Drink the immortalizing wisdom from the cup of my supreme sacrifice on the cross, which is to inspire you and all peoples of the world to make those sacrifices necessary to attain God-consciousness. Thereby, you will have found the way to liberation from suffering the cause-effect consequences of your past sinful actions."

Jesus spoke of his sacrifice on the cross as the cup,* and of the spiritual lesson involved in his crucifixion as the contents of the cup of sacrifice. When he asked his disciples to drink all of that cup, he did not mean that literal physical crucifixion is necessary in order to know God —nor that physical crucifixion alone bestows Christhood. To manifest his exalted state, Jesus had crucified ignorance by wisdom, restlessness by meditation, desires by renunciation, sense temptations by interiorization of his consciousness, hatred by love, selfishness by unselfishness, before he was ready to take on victoriously the sufferings of the cross. These are the important prerequisites to Christhood. Anyone who can crucify physical attachment by God-communion will reach the state wherein even bodily crucifixion, in whatever form, can be endured, if necessary, for God and truth.

Jesus' request that his disciples share the cup, therefore, was an exhortation to absorb into their own being his "blood of the new testament" that would awaken in them the Christ Consciousness–imbued qualities of his exemplary life. His selfless sacrifice on the cross was the ultimate demonstration of his immortality-bestowing teachings of forgiveness, divine love, unshakable fortitude, wisdom, judgment, will power, supreme love of God, love and compassion for God's children, overcoming brute force by spiritual force, self-surrender (supplanting the wishes of the little ego-self by obedience to the will of God).

In saying that his blood was to be "shed for many for the remission of sins," Jesus never meant that his crucifixion could wash away the sins of mere "believers" for all time to come. Such a possibility suggests a profound nonunderstanding of the complexity of "sin" and its roots in the universal law of karma. Obtaining forgiveness is

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* As he also prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane before his trial: "Father, if Thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but Thine, be done" (Luke 22:42).

more than a matter of belief. It requires the neutralization of the residual tendency seeds—and their potential for painful consequences—left in a wrongdoer's consciousness by his sinful actions. Certainly a master can partially or wholly free repentant devotees from the fruition of such seeds, cauterizing them by use of divine will force and cosmic energy, or working out the associated karmic burden on his own body. But it is a metaphysical error to think that merely because of professed belief in Jesus as Saviour, one can feel free to act in any way one pleases within variably broad moral constraints—behaving in worldly ways and clinging to material desires and attachments—and yet be saved from after-death consequences by the sacrifice Jesus made on the cross nineteen hundred years ago. The awe-inspiring selflessness of his suffering and death no doubt absorbed and mitigated much of the karma of his disciples.* However, in his reference to the remission of sins Jesus was stating primarily that the extraordinary example of his sacrifice on the cross, through which he attained complete liberation in Cosmic Consciousness—freedom from the willingly accepted bonds of his mortal incarnation—would serve to inspire earnest truth-seekers to forsake inferior material attachments for the supreme attainment of God-consciousness. Reaching this state, they would be free from all sins, from the law of karma that keeps souls chained to the wheel of births and rebirths with their compensatory miseries from past wrongdoings.

How the shedding of Jesus' blood on the cross worked for the remission of sins

In all of the above ways did the glorified example of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection reveal the new teaching, "the new testament"

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* In this manner they were highly purified and made fit to receive the omnipresent consciousness or Holy Ghost that later descended upon them, as promised to them by Jesus in Acts 1:5–8:

"Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence....ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."

That is, when by divine grace the apostles would become filled with the Holy Ghost, imbued with the conscious perception of the Holy Vibration of Spirit, they would be empowered witnesses of the Infinite Christ, experiencing and testifying from personal realization that the Christ Consciousness is present in the sphere of Cosmic Vibration, made manifest both in the spiritualized consciousness in the body (metaphorically, the holy city of Jerusalem) and in every part of the earth and universe. [See also Acts 2:1–21, Discourse 70.]

or covenant between God and man,* which had been foretold by the prophet Jeremiah:

"'Behold, the days come,' saith the Lord, 'that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which My covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them,' saith the Lord:

The real import of "the new covenant" and partaking of the body and blood of Christ

"'But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; after those days,' saith the Lord, 'I will put My law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be My people.'"† Jesus proclaimed this new covenant throughout his teachings, summarized in his clear declaration: "Behold, the kingdom of God is within you."‡

"'And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, "Know the Lord": for they shall all know Me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them,' saith the Lord: 'for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.'"§

Literal interpreters down the centuries have bequeathed to churchgoers the belief that, "for the remission of sins," Jesus during this Passover feast asked that people believe that they actually partake of his body and his blood—"the blood of the Lamb" (Revelation 7:14), "the

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* The word "testament" used in these verses is a translation of a Greek word whose literal meaning is "covenant." The word is used many times in the Biblical books of the Old Testament, cited as holy edicts and promises between God and earlier generations, as given through Moses and other prophets.

See, for example, Exodus 34:27–28: "And the Lord said unto Moses, 'Write thou these words: for after the tenor of these words I have made a covenant with thee and with Israel.' And he was there with the Lord forty days and forty nights; he did neither eat bread, nor drink water. And he wrote upon the tables the words of the covenant, the ten commandments."

Jesus' words about "the new testament in my blood" and "my blood of the new testament" or new covenant thus recalled scriptural passages well known to his contemporaries, e.g., Exodus 24:8: "And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, 'Behold the blood of the covenant, which the Lord hath made with you concerning all these words.'"

† Jeremiah 31:31–33.

‡ Luke 17:21 (see Discourse 61).

§ Jeremiah 31:34.

Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29), who "washed us from our sins in his own blood" (Revelation 1:5). During the original Passover each Hebrew family sacrificed and partook of the flesh of a lamb, and the lamb's blood with which they marked their homes procured their safety during the divine punishment visited upon the Egyptians. Jesus used the familiar symbology of the Passover rites to declare the new testament, the covenant brought to the world through his life. Jesus would not have alluded to a practice even metaphorically equated to a concept of cannibalism [as cited in Discourse 43].

People desecrate the name of Jesus more than honour it by such superstition. He showed again and again that his "body" was not himself. He was Spirit; he could pass through walls and walk on water because he knew the real substance of his form to be consciousness. So "flesh of Christ" means his consciousness. "Blood" means the life of Christ, the Holy Ghost Cosmic Energy that is the life and the light of his little body called Jesus and his cosmic body of the universe. The outward ritual of symbolically celebrating the Lord's Supper or Holy Communion with bread and wine blesses sincere churchgoers with devotional upliftment and inspiration; but those who have true communion with Christ can perceive Jesus not merely in a ritualistic symbolic form, but in his formless infinitude as one with the all-pervading Christ Consciousness and universal light of the Holy Ghost Cosmic Energy.*

Teresa of Avila spoke of seeing the formless Christ. She was much persecuted by the church officials for this abstruse assertion, until they discovered that centuries earlier the great church philosopher Saint Thomas Aquinas had also written of communion with the formless Christ. The body of Jesus was only a little speck of matter, but behind that was the infinite Christ Consciousness and the infinite energy of Vibratory Cosmic Light.†

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* Bhagavan Krishna, the Christ of India, declared: "Whoever realizes Me to be the Unborn and Beginningless as well as the Sovereign Lord of Creation—that man has conquered delusion and attained the sinless state even while wearing a mortal body" (*God Talks With Arjuna: The Bhagavad Gita* X:3).

† See Teresa's description of her vision of the formless Christ, Discourse 53. Her confessor, Fr. Baltasar Alvarez, at a loss to understand this experience, spent days searching for an explanation in the works of the great Catholic saints. "Finally his efforts were rewarded," says René Fülöp-Miller in relating the story in *The Saints that Moved the World* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1945). "In the *Summa Theologiae* of St. Thomas Aquinas he came across a passage presenting in extremely learned

Saint John wrote to his contemporary followers of Jesus: "This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son [the purifying power of the Holy Ghost vibration flowing from Christ Consciousness] cleanseth us from all sin."*

Anyone, of any religion or any era, who sees that Sacred Vibratory Light of God and His reflected Christ Consciousness, finds that immediately that Light changes the brain cells. This is the real import of partaking of the blood of Christ. By bathing in that Light, which was and is his manifest life and power, deeply meditating devotees are cleansed in the "blood" of divine energy that cauterizes their ignorance, bad habits, and seed tendencies of past karma. And those who

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terms an account of visions which are not perceived through the senses but *in species impressa,* by immediate conception through the intellect."

A passage about the philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas in *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (1912) tells us: "The 'species,' frequently also called *forma,* is the determinant of the mind in the process of knowledge....The *species impressa* is the modification of the faculty by the action of the object. The *species expressa* is the reaction of the mind as a cognitive process. The former is impressed in the faculty which it determines, and corresponds to the passive phase of knowledge which is a necessary condition but is not yet actual knowledge. The latter is the active response of the faculty, the cognitive process itself by which the mind reaches the object....In the beatific vision God's essence takes the place not only of the *species impressa,* but also of the *species expressa.*"

In familiar terms relevant to his knowledge, Aquinas echoed the truth of ecstatic realization voiced by the great sage Patanjali in his *Yoga Sutras* 1:17–18. "He refers to two basic categories of *samadhi:* (1) *samprajnata* and (2) *asamprajnata,*" Paramahansa Yogananda explains in *God Talks With Arjuna: The Bhagavad Gita.* "When used to define the preliminary stages of realization rather than its advanced states of fulfilment, then *samprajnata* and *asamprajnata* are relative terms used to distinguish initial supersensory experiences in meditation (*samprajnata*) from true *samadhi* or union with the object of meditation (*asamprajnata*). *Samprajnata* then refers to those primary states wherein the object of meditation is 'known accurately or thoroughly' through intuition that is still somewhat mixed with, or interpreted by, nature's subtle instruments of perception—an interaction of the knower, the knowing, and the known....By contrast, *asamprajnata* then means those superconscious experiences that are perceived through pure intuition or realization—the direct perception of the soul by being one with the object of meditation—transcendent of any intervening instrument or principle of nature." *(Publisher's Note)*

* First Epistle of St. John, 1:5–7.

tune in with his consciousness have truly tasted his "flesh" of Christ Consciousness, "the bread which came down from heaven" of which "he that eateth...shall live for ever."*

It is this that Jesus desired all devotees to do "in remembrance of me." But among those who were with him at that Last Supper, not all had ears to hear.

> *"But, behold, the hand of him that betrayeth me is with me on the table. And truly the Son of man goeth, as it was determined: but woe unto that man by whom he is betrayed!" And they began to enquire among themselves, which of them it was that should do this thing (Luke 22:21–23).*

Parallel references:

> *"He that dippeth his hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me" (Matthew 26:23).*

* * *

> *"The Son of man indeed goeth, as it is written of him: but woe to that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! Good were it for that man if he had never been born" (Mark 14:21).*†

"Behold, the hand of him who will betray me is with mine on the table. In truth my body (Son of man) is ready to go to the cross, as has been determined by the law of cause and effect affecting my body called Jesus and prophesied in the scriptures. But that same law of compensation governs the life of my betrayer. So great will be the misery resulting from this transgression of the spiritual law that sanctifies the relation between master and disciple that the treacherous one will think it would have been better for him if he had never been born."

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* John 6:58 (see commentary in Discourse 43).

† Cf. additional parallel references in Matthew 26:21–22 and 26:24; Mark 14:18–20; and John 13:21–30 (the latter commented on in Discourse 70).

When Jesus said that he would go "as it was determined" and "that this that is written must be yet accomplished in me," he did not mean that God had absolutely planned for him to be crucified. As explained earlier [Discourses 25, 35, 46, 57, and 66], Jesus was fully aware that his death "was determined" karmically by his own actions: taking onto himself the burden of many sins of his disciples and followers, and inviting retaliation by his defiance of the man-made laws of the social and religious hierarchy. The scriptures predicted the ordeal of Jesus because the prophets intuitively calculated the karmic effect to be incurred in carrying out his God-given mission. Jesus himself made it clear that he could have chosen at any time, even up to the moment of his crucifixion, to avert his fate. It was his own free choice, gladly made, to offer himself in supreme sacrifice for the healing and ultimate salvation of many by alleviation of their karmic burden.

The law of karma in relation to Jesus' crucifixion and the fate of his betrayer

Jesus' words in the above verses emphasized that Judas, too, must perforce bear the responsibility as well as the consequences of his own choices. The karmic law would decree fearsome retribution on Judas for voluntarily choosing to act as a tool of Satan's delusion and evil in betrayal of his God-given master. Jesus readily bestowed understanding and forgiveness on the woman taken in adultery, telling her accusers, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her." And on the cross he asked God's mercy even for those who carried out his torturous execution. But of the traitor Judas he said: "Woe to that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! Good were it for that man if he had never been born." Clearly, treachery is an extreme sin. Man's culpability in sins of the flesh is mitigated because he is enslaved by the *maya*-imposed compulsion of the senses. But treachery is deliberate, wilful—the most heinous sin before the tribunal of God's cosmic law. One who vows loyalty to his guru, and then breaks that vow in an act of betrayal, commits the ultimate treachery. God's laws deal severely with anyone who thus turns against one's God-sent messenger; it is thereby a betrayal of God Himself.

Yet even in such an egregious case of wrongdoing, Jesus did not forsake this soul he had accepted long before as one of his spiritual sons in the unconditional divine relationship of guru and disciple. Though the karmic law decreed that Judas's act as Satan's agent would destine him to return to the earth to learn painful lessons in many reincarnations, I know from authentic information that Judas at last attained salvation

in this twentieth century in India—owing to the direct intercession of Jesus—through the instrumentality of one of India's great masters.*

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And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest. And he said unto them, "The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve. For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? Is not he that sitteth at meat? But I am among you as he that serveth.†

"Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations. And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel."‡

And the Lord said, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren" (Luke 22:24–32).

In looking at Simon Peter through the eyes of intuition, Jesus saw all that lay hidden in that disciple's inner being. He perceived that Peter would be susceptible to Satan's cosmic delusion because of certain tendencies born of past negative karma that would influence him to succumb temporarily to mental weakness. But Jesus also beheld the good tendencies and wisdom in Peter and reinforced these by heavenly power, even as Satan was poised to work his evil influence on Peter's tendencies of weakness.

How Jesus perceived the weakness and reinforced the good in his disciple

Perceiving that the combined influence of satanic delusion and Peter's own past karma might shake the wisdom from Peter's

* See also Discourse 72.

† These verses (Luke 22:24–27) are commented on in Discourse 47 with their parallel in the Gospel According to St. Matthew.

‡ These verses (Luke 22:28–30) are commented on in Discourse 63 with their parallel in the Gospel According to St. Matthew.

consciousness as wheat is sifted from the chaff, Jesus prayed to the almighty Father. He asked that his disciple's intuitive conviction of wisdom be not dislodged by the shakings of temptation. Then he instructed Peter that when—through the grace of God, Jesus' intercession, and the influence of Peter's stored good tendencies—he became free from delusion, he should strengthen his brother disciples and truth-seekers with the power of his renewed wisdom and faith.

> *And he said unto him, "Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death."*
>
> *And he said, "I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me" (Luke 22:33–34).*

Parallel reference:

> *Then saith Jesus unto them, "All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, 'I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad.'* But after I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee."*
>
> *Peter answered and said unto him, "Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended."*
>
> *Jesus said unto him, "Verily I say unto thee, that this night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice."*
>
> *Peter said unto him, "Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee." Likewise also said all the disciples (Matthew 26:31–35).*†

After discerning how Satan's influence would work on Peter's past weakness tendencies, Jesus predicted that Peter would thrice deny him before the cock crowed. Because Jesus' knowing power was coextensive with all space and time, he perceived occurrences of past, present, and future in a seamless continuum actuated by the universal law of causation.

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* Zechariah 13:7.

† Cf. additional parallel references in Mark 14:27–31 and John 13:37–38.

There are many ways of divining the future, of varying reliability. For example, a person's future may be foretold by observation of his character, by astrology, or by tracing his actions of present and past lives. The latter method involves the power of omniscience; Jesus used only this power in prophesying future events. Ordinary insightful individuals may partially predict the behaviour of another person by using the observational and inferential powers of the intellect. But there are inherent defects in this method, inasmuch as the conclusion may be entirely wrong if there is the slightest mistake in discerning that person's behaviour or underlying motives. Astrological analysis is likewise inexact when practised by those of unawakened intuition. However, predictive knowledge is invariably true when derived through attunement with God's all-knowing divine consciousness, by which illumined seers can directly perceive not only a person's past-life actions and their mathematical effect, but also the circumstantial details of impending events in which such effects will play out.

The awareness of Jesus encompassed past, present, and future

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*And he said unto them, "When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked ye any thing?"**
And they said, "Nothing" (Luke 22:35).

Jesus here reminds his disciples that renunciants who forego worldly pursuits to devote themselves to God's work, unconcerned about material necessities, will find divine help in everything. With a love omniscient and omnipresent the Lord reciprocates the selfless service of devotees; His silent command vibrating through all nature brings about the fulfilment of their every need, often in mysterious ways.

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Then said he unto them, "But now, he that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise his scrip: and he that hath no sword, let him

* Jesus refers to his instructions when he sent the disciples out to preach, recorded in Luke 10:4 (see Discourse 40). "Scrip" is an archaic word for a small knapsack or shoulder bag used in Palestine by travellers or shepherds for carrying food or other basic needs.

sell his garment, and buy one. For I say unto you, that this that is written must yet be accomplished in me, 'And he was reckoned among the transgressors': for the things concerning me have an end."

And they said, "Lord, behold, here are two swords."
And he said unto them, "It is enough" (Luke 22:36–38).

66 As long as my manifestation of Christ Consciousness has been with you, through my attunement with divine abundance your material needs have been looked after and you have been protected. But now, as the time of my passing draws nigh, you must be watchful; keep at hand a travel bag and some money if you have them. And if you have no sword, buy one; for as the scriptures have foretold, I will be classified as an ordinary criminal.* All things predicted about me have a meaning that must be accomplished during my manifestation on earth; and their fulfilment is soon to be concluded."

Jesus' practical wisdom in applying spiritual truths in the world of relativity

Intuitive wisdom, though transcending ordinary knowledge, does not make one otherworldly or impractical; it is the parent of common sense, which is simply intuitional reaction to one's environment. Practical wisdom prompted Jesus in the above verses to emphasize the necessity for commonsense adaptability in applying spiritual truths rightly in the world of relativity. He pointed out that high-minded, advanced disciples experiencing the manifestation of Christ Consciousness need neither personal possessions nor any mode of protection; all their needs are supplied through their attunement with that Universal Intelligence. Such devotees never worry about taking care of the body, what they shall eat or what they should put on, for all these things shall be added unto them as a part of their divine realization. They are fully satisfied in the nonchalant sufficiency of having much or little. But Jesus further notes that persons whose consciousness is not yet settled in God-consciousness should exercise common sense and good judgment in supplying themselves with bodily necessities and reasonable protection. He knew that when the aureole of his divine presence would be withdrawn, his disciples would go through many tests and

* Isaiah 53:12: "...and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors."

trials, which might demand the use of money—or even the appearance of protection in the carrying of a sword.

Jesus signified that the God within him would be humbly unmoved, even though classified, in the eyes of ignorance, as an ordinary criminal. Everything in his life and his death would accomplish a divine purpose. Against the dark background of human nonunderstanding that reckoned him "among the transgressors," the light of his divinity would shine all the more brilliantly.

Jesus' practicality foresaw that if his disciples carried visible weapons they would have reasonable protection from unscrupulous persecuting fanatics. But he did not want all of his faithful apostles to be equipped like soldiers! Their most powerful protection lay in their virtue and wisdom, not in swords. Two swords would be a sufficient statement of their courage that would deter cowardly persecutors. That, in reality, was the purpose Jesus wanted the swords to serve; he never desired that they be used for bloodshed.

Deeply spiritual persons who, by the very nature of their practices, are meek and humble within do not allow themselves to be inwardly distressed by persecution. Nevertheless, they need not offer themselves as doormats to be unnecessarily trampled upon by the ignorant. Righteous persons should display righteous thoughts and fearlessness to overcome their abusers. Jesus foresaw that Peter's fierce loyalty to his master would result in the regrettable use of a sword to cut off the ear of one of the guards who came to arrest Jesus.* Though Jesus did not wish for such violence, he preferred his disciples to be courageous in righteous indignation rather than to fly away through cowardice. He well understood that the impending persecution would strike terror into the hearts of some of his disciples, and he wanted to prepare their consciousness to be strong and fearless in defending the divine cause.

Jesus had already taught the disciples that to conquer evil by spiritual force is the highest way—to turn the left cheek when slapped upon the right one.† But he points out here that it is sometimes necessary to resist evil by a show of physical force if the power to resist evil spiritually is lacking. To flee from evil through fear is cowardly and unspiritual; to resist evil by physical force is better than that; but to conquer evil by superior spiritual force is the consummate ideal.

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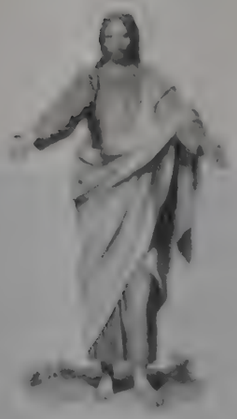
* John 18:10 (see Discourse 73).

† See Discourse 27, commentary on Matthew 5:38–42 and Luke 6:29–30.

These verses speak of Jesus' pragmatic application of divine wisdom. To his advanced disciples he generally advised absolute renunciation. But he recognised that even renunciants may sometimes require material practicalities according to their circumstances. So in a broader perspective, persons with material responsibilities should adapt to their environment and accommodation of their needs, but without compromising spiritual principles.



DISCOURSE 70

"Love One Another as I Have Loved You"

The Last Supper, Part II

Jesus' Divine Example of Humble Service to All

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Through Intuition, Jesus Knew the Treacherous Intent of Judas

❖

The Guru Leads His Disciples to a Better Place in the "Many Mansions" of the Astral Realm

❖

"I Am the Way": Attunement With Christ Consciousness Is the Only Way to the Father's Kingdom

❖

Contact With "the Comforter, Which Is the Holy Ghost" Imparts Divine Wisdom and Bliss

❖

Through Yoga Techniques of Meditation on Aum, One Receives the Second Coming of Christ

"Jesus told the beloved advanced disciples that although his body would soon be gone, yet he would leave with them the art of contacting the great comforting Bliss present in Cosmic Vibration."

And supper being ended, *the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him; Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God; he riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself. After that he poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded.*

Then cometh he to Simon Peter: and Peter saith unto him, "Lord, dost thou wash my feet?"

Jesus answered and said unto him, "What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter."

Peter saith unto him, "Thou shalt never wash my feet."

Jesus answered him, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me."

Simon Peter saith unto him, "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head."

Jesus saith to him, "He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all." For he knew who should betray him; therefore said he, "Ye are not all clean."

So after he had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, and was set down again, he said unto them, "Know ye what I have done to you? Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, the servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.

"I speak not of you all: I know whom I have chosen: but that the scripture may be fulfilled, 'He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me.' Now I tell you before it come, that, when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am he.

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth me; and he that receiveth me receiveth Him that sent me."

When Jesus had thus said, he was troubled in spirit, and testified, and said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me." Then the disciples looked one on another, doubting of whom he spake.

Now there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved. Simon Peter therefore beckoned to him, that he should ask who it should be of whom he spake. He then lying on Jesus' breast saith unto him, "Lord, who is it?"

Jesus answered, "He it is, to whom I shall give a sop, when I have dipped it." And when he had dipped the sop, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon.

And after the sop Satan entered into him. Then said Jesus unto him, "That thou doest, do quickly."

Now no man at the table knew for what intent he spake this unto him. For some of them thought, because Judas had the bag, that Jesus had said unto him, "Buy those things that we have need of against the feast"; or, that he should give something to the poor. He then having received the sop went immediately out: and it was night.

Therefore, when he was gone out, Jesus said, "Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him. If God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in Himself, and shall straightway glorify him.

"Little children, yet a little while I am with you. Ye shall seek me: and as I said unto the Jews, 'Whither I go, ye cannot come'; so now I say to you.

"A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."

Simon Peter said unto him, "Lord, whither goest thou?"

Jesus answered him, "Whither I go, thou canst not follow me now; but thou shalt follow me afterwards."

Peter said unto him, "Lord, why cannot I follow thee now? I will lay down my life for thy sake."

Jesus answered him, "Wilt thou lay down thy life for my sake? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, the cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied me thrice.

"Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know."

Thomas saith unto him, "Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way?"

Jesus saith unto him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know Him, and have seen Him."

Philip saith unto him, "Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us."

Jesus saith unto him, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, 'Shew us the Father'? Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? The words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, He doeth the works. Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake.

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father. And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.

"If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world

cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him: but ye know Him; for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.

"Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also. At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you. He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him."

Judas saith unto him, not Iscariot, "Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?"

Jesus answered and said unto him, "If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him. He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me. These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you.

"But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.

"Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. Ye have heard how I said unto you, 'I go away, and come again unto you.' If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, 'I go unto the Father': for my Father is greater than I.

"And now I have told you before it come to pass, that, when it is come to pass, ye might believe. Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me. But that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do. Arise, let us go hence."

—John 13:2—14:31

DISCOURSE 70

"Love One Another as I Have Loved You"

The Last Supper, Part II

And supper being ended, the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him; Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God; he riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself. After that he poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded.

Then cometh he to Simon Peter: and Peter saith unto him, "Lord, dost thou wash my feet?"

Jesus answered and said unto him, "What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter."

Peter saith unto him, "Thou shalt never wash my feet."

Jesus answered him, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me."

Simon Peter saith unto him, "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head."

Jesus saith to him, "He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all." For he knew who should betray him; therefore said he, "Ye are not all clean."

So after he had washed their feet, and had taken his garments and was set down again, he said unto them, "Know ye what I have done to you? Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, the servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them" (John 13:2–17).

Jesus had several purposes in washing the feet of his disciples. Primarily, it was to show them the ideal of humbleness expressed in selfless service. "You call me Lord of creation and Master or Guru; and you say it truthfully, for so I am because of my Father's wish. If I, as your guru and as a true manifestation of the Christ Consciousness that rules all creation, have in humbleness washed your feet, then you ought to serve each other likewise. For I have given you an example, that you should do unto all as I have done to you."

Washing the feet of the disciples: Jesus' divine example of humble service to all

Since the spiritual servant, the disciple, is not greater than his master or guru as regards his state of realization, and is not equal until he attains final liberation and becomes one with the consciousness of his master in Cosmic Consciousness, so also neither Jesus nor his disciples, who were sent on earth by God, could be greater than God. And if God in Jesus served the disciples (who, being created by God, were subordinate to Him), it certainly behoved them to follow the divine example by humbly serving all, even to the least, no matter how high their own spiritual status.

With this compelling demonstration, Jesus hoped that his disciples, in turn, would be inspired not only to "wash the feet" of each other—to treat each other in the same spirit of love and respect he had shown to them—but also to extend that spirit of service to all people, physically, mentally, and spiritually. He assured the disciples that if they understood and remembered the lessons he had taught them, and governed their lives accordingly, they would realize the immutable spiritual happiness of a life sheltered in the pure humility of selflessness.

Even the Heavenly Father serves impartially in silent humbleness: He has created the water in the well, and as the indwelling Spirit in the water and in every person, it is He who washes the feet of His children

—even the egotistical and materialistic persons who never honour Him.

By washing the feet even of Judas, who was going to betray him, Jesus intimated that those disciples who would be like their master ought to act like him by ministering unto others without discriminating as to whether they were friends or enemies—to render help to everyone alike whenever they were in dire need.

It was because of his foreknowledge of the impending betrayal by Judas that Jesus said, "What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter." He wanted to bring out, through the drama of washing the feet of each one of the disciples, the fact that one among them was spiritually unclean.

When Peter refused to be ministered to in this way, Jesus admonished him: "If I wash you not, you are not spiritually connected with me as a disciple is with his master."* Jesus was emphasizing the importance not of physical washing but of spiritual cleansing as first and foremost. This is made evident by his saying, in effect: "He who is spiritually washed needs only an occasional physical cleansing to be clean in every way. Most of you are spiritually clean, but not all of you." Thus he dramatically foretold his knowledge of the betrayal of Judas.

"I speak not of you all: I know whom I have chosen: but that the scripture may be fulfilled, 'He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me.'† Now I tell you before it come, that, when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am he.

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth me; and he that receiveth me receiveth Him that sent me."

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* Washing his disciples' feet also afforded Jesus the opportunity to impart to them purifying blessings through the magnetic exchange of vibratory energy. As explained earlier, the hands and feet function as positive and negative poles which when contacted generate a flow of subtle currents of life force. In the time-honoured custom of touching the feet of great souls, the disciple is the negative pole that is surcharged with divine power from the master who is the positive pole. When Jesus washed the feet of his disciples he operated this same law, the meeting of positive and negative poles—with himself as the positive, the disciples as the negative—and thereby through the touch of his hands blessed the disciples with spiritually purifying vibrations.

† "Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me" (Psalms 41:9).

When Jesus had thus said, he was troubled in spirit, and testified, and said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me." Then the disciples looked one on another, doubting of whom he spake.

Now there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved. Simon Peter therefore beckoned to him, that he should ask who it should be of whom he spake. He then lying on Jesus' breast saith unto him, "Lord, who is it?"

Jesus answered, "He it is, to whom I shall give a sop, when I have dipped it." And when he had dipped the sop, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon.

And after the sop Satan entered into him. Then said Jesus unto him, "That thou doest, do quickly."

Now no man at the table knew for what intent he spake this unto him. For some of them thought, because Judas had the bag, that Jesus had said unto him, "Buy those things that we have need of against the feast"; or, that he should give something to the poor. He then having received the sop went immediately out: and it was night (John 13:18–30).

66 I am not speaking of all of you as being defiled by ignorance and traitorous intent; I know whom my intuition has detected ('chosen') from amongst you as the one who would voluntarily through evil karma and influence of delusion betray me. The prophets who knew about my coming on earth and intuitionally calculated the law of karma affecting me, my good disciples, and the bad one who would betray me, wrote in the scriptures of my crucifixion. He who eats bread with me is ready to strike me. I am foretelling now about the crucifixion so that you may know when that event actually happens that I am Christ about whom the crucifixion has been predicted.

Through intuition, Jesus knew the treacherous intent of Judas

"Of the truth which I feel within me, I declare unto you, he who receives (listens and obeys) anyone whomsoever I send to preach the truth actually listens to and obeys me; and he who receives me—he who is in tune with Christ Consciousness—is automatically in tune with Cosmic Consciousness, whose reflection I am."*

* Jesus had also voiced this promise to his apostles earlier; see Matthew 10:40, commented on in Discourse 41.

When Jesus said, "I know whom I have chosen," he did not intimate that he had chosen Judas as a fit mechanical vehicle for carrying out a divine mandate in order to play the drama of life and death and resurrection. Jesus merely stated that his divine intuition detected the malign thoughts of Judas whose intent was to betray him, being under the influence of satanic delusion.*

The love of God that characterized the greatness of Jesus responded to the pure immediacy of John's devotion, so that notwithstanding the usual reserve in the presence of divinity, this beloved disciple was often allowed by Jesus to lean on his breast—as would a child seeking succour from its mother. This divinely human nature of Jesus, an avatar in whom God was fully manifest, was so tenderly loving that it shows how intimately personal is the love of God that can be received by anyone who loves God deeply, as John did. The love shown by Jesus is the love of God; this Jesus expressed in one of his greatest sermons, when he said (in the next series of verses): "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you." Jesus thus conveyed to the disciples that he loved them as God loved them; and that it was of no use for them to love him with a selfish love that did not include love for one another as he loved them. Divine love is a transcending power, elevating and all-embracing; mundane love is self-seeking and circumscriptive. Jesus taught his disciples not only to feel God as the great manifestation of love and ever new joy in meditation, but also to love God in His tangible presence in the temples of human bodies.

In answer to John's query as to the identity of the betrayer among them, Jesus said he would point out the malefactor by giving him a piece of bread he had dipped. Jesus' words after giving the bread to Judas signified:

"O Judas Iscariot, you are possessed by satanic cosmic delusion due to your evil karma; therefore, do quickly what you have made up your mind to do and get it over with, lest you harbour your evil impulse longer and become ready to do greater evil."

* See also Discourse 69, explanation of karma and free choice in the context of Luke 22:21–23.

Therefore, when he was gone out, Jesus said, "Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him. If God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in Himself, and shall straightway glorify him.

"Little children, yet a little while I am with you. Ye shall seek me: and as I said unto the Jews, 'Whither I go, ye cannot come'; so now I say to you.

"A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."

Simon Peter said unto him, "Lord, whither goest thou?"

Jesus answered him, "Whither I go, thou canst not follow me now; but thou shalt follow me afterwards."

Peter said unto him, "Lord, why cannot I follow thee now? I will lay down my life for thy sake."

*Jesus answered him, "Wilt thou lay down thy life for my sake? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, the cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied me thrice" (John 13:31–38).**

66 Now my body, which is going to be crucified for the sake of preaching truth, is glorified and honoured by the blessing of God. And through my sacrifice on the cross God's glorious qualities are to be made manifest. If God be thus glorified through my bodily sacrifice, then shall He also lift me in His consciousness and thereby glorify me in Himself.

"Little children of wisdom, my body will be with you now for but a little while. And then when my body is gone, you will seek Christ Consciousness in me; and as I said unto the Jews, 'The omnipresent place wherein my consciousness will commingle, your consciousness cannot yet reach, because at present you lack sufficient spiritual advancement.'†

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*The last two verses (Jesus' prediction of Peter's denial) are commented on in Discourse 69 with their parallels from Luke and Matthew.

†The earlier statement to which Jesus referred is recorded in John 8:21; see commentary in Discourse 51. Also see commentary on John 7:33–34, Discourse 50, in which Jesus tells the Pharisees, "Yet a little while am I with you, and then I go unto Him that sent me. Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me: and where I am, thither ye cannot come."

"I am giving you a new commandment of spiritual law, that as disciples you should love one another. As I have loved you with divine love, so also with the same divine love you should love one another.* This love, if expressed by you, would be the spiritual insignia by which the people of the world can recognise you as my disciples—exemplars of the message of God's love for which I lived and died."

Jesus' new commandment to his disciples: Be exemplars of God's love

Jesus' answer to Peter's query, "Lord, whither goest thou?" conveyed to his disciple: "I leave this body to unite the consciousness of my body permanently with the Christ Consciousness in everything. At the present stage of your spiritual development you cannot meditate deeply enough to raise your consciousness through subconsciousness and soul-superconsciousness in ecstasy to follow me into the omnipresent Christ Consciousness. But the time will come, after you have been able spiritually to refine your consciousness, that you will be able to follow me through the many corridors of the Christ Consciousness indwelling in everything."

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"Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know" (John 14:1–4).

What Jesus meant by this advice and these promises might be more fully expressed as follows: "Do not trouble your heart, the feeling aspect of your consciousness, no matter what trials come to you. Keep your meditation-born spiritual perception fixed on the imperturbability of Cosmic Consciousness beyond creation and Christ Consciousness present in all creation. Regardless of troubles, remain securely focused on the Divine Consciousness on both planes—in the cosmic vibratory region and in the quiescent realm beyond all vibrations.

* See also commentary on John 15:12 and 15:17 (in which Jesus repeats this commandment), Discourse 71.

"In the kingdom of Cosmic Consciousness and cosmic creation (the Father's house) there are many mansions, regions differing in their vibrations, where souls dwell according to their earth-acquired good or bad vibrations. If this were not so I would not have told you. As your guru-saviour, divinely appointed to lead you to God, I will go ahead of you to merge with the Cosmic Consciousness and prepare a place for you in accordance with your spiritual attainments. And when the Christ Consciousness in me has thus merged in Cosmic Consciousness, I will try to bring you there. My Christ Consciousness, attracted by your devotion and ecstasy, will come again—be manifest a second time in your consciousness—and merge your body-born consciousness in Itself, that you, too, may become omnipresent. When this occurs, then you will know where my embodied Christ Consciousness has gone. It is going there soon—when I dissolve the body after resurrection. And once you know the abode of Christ Consciousness as omnipresence, you will know the way to commune consciously with that Universal Intelligence at any time."

The imperturbable calmness advised by Jesus and the science of yoga

When Jesus said, "Let not your heart be troubled," he voiced an exact parallel to a profound spiritual aphorism in the *Yoga Sutras,* the preeminent ancient treatise on *Raja Yoga.* There the illumined sage Patanjali says that yoga, union with God, is possible only by stilling the restlessness of the heart (*chitta,* the feeling faculty of consciousness).* The restless disturbances of *chitta* that distort man's perception of his real Self, the soul-image of God within, are agitations born of the likes and dislikes of the body-bound ego, or pseudosoul. The mind made restless by the attractions and repulsions of the senses cloaks the soul in an appearance of imperfection; but the soul, being an individualized reflection of Spirit, is immutably ever perfect. The divine nature of that Self is clearly perceived as soon as the heart, the responses of feeling, becomes perfectly calm. This is what Jesus intended, advising his disciples to take the entirety of human experiences calmly, like the Oriental yogi, without forming egoistic likes and dislikes—attraction to what is pleasant, aversion to what is painful or difficult.

Souls are sent on earth by God to watch His cosmic motion picture with a calm, nonattached consciousness befitting souls made in

* *Yoga Sutras* 1:2. See also Discourse 33, pages 612 ff., and Discourse 26, pages 439 ff.

His divine image. But when they respond to earthly experiences with the permutations of likes and dislikes, they lose their immortal consciousness. Any soul who forgets its spiritual status during its earthly sojourn forms mortal attachments, and thus has to reincarnate until the mundane desires are worked out and the lost divine consciousness is regained. That is why Jesus and Self-realized yogis advise all truth-seekers to pass through trials, fortunes and misfortunes, struggling for righteousness with an undisturbed state of heart, as the way of attaining salvation, Cosmic Consciousness.*

Thus when Jesus says, "In my Father's house are many mansions," he warns his disciples that unless they attain Cosmic Consciousness, after death they would have to dwell on one of the variously graded planes of existence where unredeemed souls go according to their merits and demerits. His promise, "I go to prepare a place for you," refers to the fact that the blessings of a true guru can help his disciples to gain a better place in the many-mansioned vibratory spheres in the after-death state. In my autobiography I have recounted how, during my experience of the resurrection of my guru, Swami Sri Yukteswarji, he described his dwelling as a saviour in a supernal region of the astral heaven inhabited by souls who have overcome earthly ties. His words were a wondrous assurance: "There you and your exalted loved ones shall someday come to be with me."†

The guru leads his disciples to a better place in the "many mansions" of the astral realm

So when Jesus said he would prepare a place for his disciples, he signified his role as their guru who, even after his passing, would continue to help them toward their attainment of Cosmic Consciousness.

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* "When the *chitta* (feeling) is absolutely subjugated and is calmly established in the Self, the yogi, thus devoid of attachment to all desires, is spoken of as the God-united....

"The state of complete tranquility of the feeling (*chitta*), attained by yoga meditation, in which the self (ego) perceives itself as the Self (soul) and is content (fixed) in the Self;

"The state in which the sense-transcendent immeasurable bliss becomes known to the awakened intuitive intelligence, and in which the yogi remains enthroned, never again to be removed;

"The state that, once found, the yogi considers as the treasure beyond all other treasures—anchored therein, he is immune to even the mightiest grief;

"That state is known as yoga—the pain-free state. The practice of yoga is therefore to be observed resolutely and with a stout heart" (*God Talks With Arjuna: The Bhagavad Gita* VI:18, 20–23).

† See *Autobiography of a Yogi,* Chapter 43.

Thus he said, "I will come again"—not that he would have to reappear in person to his disciples in order to assist them toward liberation, but that through their communion with Christ Consciousness in spiritual ecstasy his consciousness would appear a second time in their consciousness. Thereby their consciousness would expand into the omnipresence of Christ Consciousness, "receive you unto myself," through which they would attain final liberation in Cosmic Consciousness.

When Jesus says, "Whither I go ye know, and the way ye know," he reminds his disciples that the abode of Christ Consciousness is omnipresence, and the way to that abode lies in the art of keeping the heart untroubled by earthly experiences, remaining settled in the omnipresent Christ Consciousness in the soul, and thereby uniting human consciousness with Cosmic Consciousness.

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Thomas saith unto him, "Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way?"

Jesus saith unto him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know Him, and have seen Him" (John 14:5–7).

Explaining these verses, my revered guru Sri Yukteswarji said: "Jesus meant, never that he was the sole Son of God, but that no man can attain the unqualified Absolute, the transcendent Father *beyond* creation, until he has first manifested the 'Son' or activating Christ Consciousness *within* creation. Jesus, who had achieved entire oneness with that Christ Consciousness, identified himself with it inasmuch as his own ego had long since been dissolved."

"I am the way": Attunement with Christ Consciousness is the only way to the Father's kingdom

The Christ Consciousness present in Jesus, and in all vibratory creation and phenomena, is the noumenon, "truth," the primary substance and essence of life of everything in creation. No human being who is a part of vibratory creation can take his consciousness to Cosmic Consciousness, "the Father"—which lies beyond vibratory creation and the immanent Christ Consciousness—without first experiencing the Christ-imbued Cosmic Vibration, or Holy Ghost, that

manifests vibratory creation, then passing through the God-reflection of Christ Consciousness. In other words, to "come unto the Father" every human consciousness has to expand and attain realization of the Cosmic Vibration first, and then know Christ Consciousness, in order to reach Cosmic Consciousness.

Jesus went on to say that everyone who had "known" him (contacted the Christ Consciousness in him) should realize that they had also automatically contacted the Cosmic Consciousness (the "Father"), for the Cosmic Consciousness and Its only begotten reflection omnipresent in creation—the Christ Consciousness—are one.

Here Jesus clearly explained his inner Self as Spirit. He never emphasized his body, always the omnipresent Spirit within the body. It is important to remember the above point as a basis of understanding the spiritual cosmography: that the Christ Consciousness is the primary substance and essence, "the truth, and the life" of vibratory creation—the noumenon existing behind every phenomenon. When Jesus said: "Ye know Him, and have seen Him," he never meant that the thousands of people who saw the body of Jesus realized that here was a manifestation of Christ Consciousness, and therefore of the Father. Only those advanced disciples who attuned themselves with Christ Consciousness by deep meditation could realize the presence of the Father as one with the Christ Consciousness manifested in the incarnate form of Jesus.

Philip saith unto him, "Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us."

Jesus saith unto him, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, 'Shew us the Father'? Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? The words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, He doeth the works. Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake.

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father. And whatsoever ye

every manner of good works that were manifested through the body called Jesus. This prophecy included future devotees, for he meant that all who were (and all who are now or will be) in tune with Christ Consciousness would perform what he had done, and even greater miracles than he had demonstrated.

Jesus foretells miraculous works to be revealed through future saints and savants

Jesus foretold these truths because he knew that his Christ Consciousness was soon to be released from the body to be united with the Cosmic Consciousness. He wanted to assure the world through his disciples that the manifold miraculous happenings of his life were not the end of the wondrous works of God. Since God is infinite, His miraculous works are infinite; and they would from time to time be revealed through the lives of great saints and in the patient researches of generations of scientists. Jesus' words foreshadowed the miracles of modern aviation, radio, television, submarines, control and cure of diseases, the unraveling of the mysteries of the atom—as well as the reason-defying miracles of great saints who are in tune with the omnipresent Christ-*Kutastha* Intelligence. In *Autobiography of a Yogi* I have written of many God-knowing saints whose powers yet confound the known scientific norms by the workings of higher laws whose secret chambers are still to be unlocked to common knowledge. Yoga refers to divine powers as *siddhis*. One who overcomes the bondage of delusion is said to possess the eight principal powers, or *maha siddhis*—the *aishvaryas,* "ascetic majesties."*

The potential in the soul, the God-image in man, is limitless once it breaks the bodily circumscriptions and unites with its infinite Self. The soul's manifesting powers increase with its expanding identification with its superconscious cosmic body, then with the infinite Christ

* "The eight principal divine powers, referred to as *aishvaryas,* which can be manifested by the incarnate being who has attained mastery over the forces of creation, are as follows: the power to make one's body or any object (1) as small as desired (*anima*), (2) as large as desired (*mahima*), (3) as light in weight as desired (*laghima*), and (4) as heavy as desired (*garima*); the power (5) to obtain anything desired (*prapti*), (6) to bring anything under his control (*vashitva*), (7) to satisfy all desires by the force of his will (*prakamya*), and (8) to become *Isha,* Lord, over everything. In the *Yoga Sutras* of the sage Patanjali, other powers (*siddhis*) are also discussed. The attainment of mastery over phenomenal creation is not a goal of the enlightened man, but is a natural endowment of the omnipotent, omniscient soul—the immortal Self, which becomes manifest as it gradually sheds its coverings of delusion."—*God Talks With Arjuna: The Bhagavad Gita*

Intelligence, and ultimately with Cosmic Consciousness. In the mastery of absolute oneness with Cosmic Consciousness, the uncircumscribed Consciousness has God's own manifesting power; it can even create planets for habitation by beings superior to human creatures.

In higher evolutionary ages, there will be undreamed-of demonstrations on earth by saints yet to come. And scientists will discover the method of carrying on interplanetary communication, and far better ways of treating human maladies. So many yet-to-be revealed marvels are what Jesus referred to when he spoke of the "greater works" that would in some future time be manifested.

Science has already done great things; but still it has very little control over the nervous system and mind for elevating the human consciousness, which can be attained by the science of yoga as taught by God-realized masters, as also by Christ to his disciples. Their path of God-realization is not one of negative deprival, but renunciation of delusion's petty offerings in order to realize the all-inclusiveness of God's kingdom. The miracles of Jesus were not an end in themselves, but to convince people that finding God is much greater than any worldly accomplishment. His wonders were not to entertain people or just to give them temporary succour—or to so establish himself that for the centuries to come generations would adore his name and build churches in his honour, while never understanding what he meant for them to learn: that they also are intended to achieve oneness with the omnipotent Christ Consciousness.*

When Jesus declares, "Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do," it is not so simple as just saying, "Jesus, please make me as spiritually great as Saint Francis"; or, "Jesus, make me as rich as Henry Ford," and it will be so. The words "in my name" signify the creative Cosmic Vibration in which the Christ Consciousness is hidden. The devotee must know the technique of listening to the Cosmic Vibration—the great *Aum* or Amen, the voice of the Holy Ghost—and be able also to feel the omnipresence of that Vibration with its im-

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* "Jesus Christ belonged to the true race of prophets. He saw with open eye the mystery of the soul....Ravished with its beauty, he lived in it, and had his being there....One man was true to what is in you and me. He saw that God incarnates himself in man, and evermore goes forth anew to take possession of his world. He said, in this jubilee of sublime emotion, 'I am divine. Through me, God acts; through me, speaks. Would you see God, see me; or, see thee, when thou also thinkest as I now think.'"—Emerson, *Address to Harvard Divinity School, 1838.*

manent Christ Consciousness.* In perfect accord and communion with that Holy Vibration and immanent Christ Consciousness, the devotee can accomplish anything by appealing to those forces. That is why Jesus promised that whatever a devotee asked while intuitively perceiving the Cosmic Vibration and the Christ Consciousness in him (in his "name"), he would materialise, that the Cosmic Consciousness ("the Father") might be glorified through its all-powerful reflection in the Christ Consciousness ("the Son").

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> *"If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him: but ye know Him; for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.*
>
> *"Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also. At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you. He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him" (John 14:15–21).*

Today the same admonition applies that Jesus gave to his immediate disciples. If a devotee loves him (that is, loves contact with the Christ Consciousness in him) then he or she must faithfully follow the commandments—the laws of bodily and mental discipline and meditation—which are required to manifest the Christ Consciousness in the individual's own consciousness.

A promise of eternal love and blessing to all who follow the way of Christ-discipline

Then Jesus said that if their love was actively expressed in the ardour of spiritual endeavour, he would pray, intercede, for his disciples, and all truth-seekers, that by their deep meditation they might contact another Comforter of all human sorrows—the Holy Ghost or Cosmic Vibration which exists in every human soul forever

* This meditation technique is taught in *Yogoda Satsanga Lessons* (see page 1575 and "*Aum* (Om)" in glossary).

and forever. The "Spirit of truth" is the Cosmic Consciousness manifesting Itself as the Holy Ghost imbued with Its reflection of Christ Consciousness. Cosmic Consciousness is an oceanic Presence that cannot be received in the small cup of worldly human consciousness. But when the devotee hears within himself in deep meditation the cosmic sound of the Holy Ghost vibration and then merges his consciousness in that vibration, he experiences an expanding consciousness and awareness that this sound is the repository of Truth expressing the presence of the Infinite. The devotee at first has moments of intuitive perceptions of Cosmic Consciousness dwelling within his soul, and in time learns to be aware of it constantly.

Finally, Jesus told the beloved advanced disciples that although his body would soon be gone, yet he would leave with them the art of contacting the great comforting Bliss present in Cosmic Vibration; and through that contact, the Christ Consciousness would be revealed to them a second time.

"Yet a little while my body will be present in the world, and then the world shall lose sight of this body and the Christ Consciousness in it. But those of you who are advanced, contact the Christ Consciousness; in it you will find my life and your life and know that Infinite Intelligence to be the condition of all life existing in the cosmos and in the hereafter." Jesus added that on the day divine wisdom manifested in them through an expanded consciousness, they would know that all forms are related: Christ Consciousness is in the bosom of Cosmic Consciousness and the devotee's consciousness is manifested in Christ Consciousness and Christ's life can manifest in the awakened devotee's life.

Jesus then declared that any truth-seeker who is in tune with his commandments of self-discipline, and practises them in every aspect of his life, will eventually be able to contact and devotedly love the Christ Consciousness that was present in Jesus (and is within everyone). And any devotee who loves the Christ Consciousness receives the love in that Consciousness and also the love present in the Cosmic Consciousness, manifesting itself to him through his divinely attuned consciousness.

Judas saith unto him, not Iscariot, "Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?"

Jesus answered and said unto him, "If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him. He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me. These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you.

"But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you" (John 14:22–26).

Jesus knew that his body was not ordained to appear, after resurrection, to the people of the world en masse. So he said that after resurrection he would be visible only to his advanced disciples and enlightened followers—those who "love me" and "will keep my words."

How the devotee's consciousness becomes an altar of Christ and Cosmic Consciousness

Further, it was important for them to realize that he was not speaking primarily of his physical body and its appearance to devotees. Rather, whenever a devotee loves the Christ Consciousness, the reflection of the Heavenly Father that was in Jesus, and wishes to contact that manifestation through meditation, he will surely follow Jesus' words of wisdom and the forms of self-discipline that will lead to such contact. The devotee who can regularly contact the Christ Consciousness will also feel the love of the Cosmic Consciousness, "the Father," and both will appear in the consciousness of that devotee; and Their united vibrations, which bring forth manifestations of Their Divine Presence, will permanently dwell in him. But the person who does not follow the teachings of contact with the Cosmic Vibration, "keepeth not my sayings," finds no realization of the Christ Consciousness within himself, and thus feels no attachment to it, "loveth me not." When Jesus said, "We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him," he specifically cited the advanced devotee who by meditation attains the state of Christ Consciousness and holds on to it with an increasing fervour of divine love, and who thereby gradually feels the state of Cosmic Consciousness. Such a devotee can experience Christ Consciousness in all creation and Cosmic Consciousness beyond all creation. His consciousness becomes an omnipresent altar where both reign—and both "make Their abode" with him. Just as a man can have both great wisdom and devotion for God, so the advanced devotee is endowed with

many differing exalted states of consciousness. He feels the Holy Ghost as great bliss, Christ Intelligence as great wisdom, and Cosmic Consciousness as the essence of bliss, love, wisdom, and everything that is in the cosmos and in Infinity. The ordinary man is guided by his book knowledge, worldly experience, and habits acquired in past incarnations; but the advanced devotee is guided by the omniscient intelligences of God, Christ, and the Holy Ghost.

Again Jesus reminded the disciples that the Cosmic Vibration or "word which ye hear," the Holy Ghost whose sound they heard within themselves, was not a manifestation of his power, "but the Father's," the emanation of Cosmic Consciousness, "which sent me," which also reflected Itself as the Christ Consciousness present in him. By divine ordinance, Jesus revealed many truths to the disciples while he was present with them, but promised that when, by meditation, they contacted the Holy Ghost, the Cosmic Vibration made sacred by the presence of Christ Consciousness within it, then they would know that the Father was sending that Cosmic Vibration, or Comforter, "in my name." And from this Holy Vibration that they were to contact in meditation would emanate the great Christ Bliss present in it, to comfort them in all miseries.

Contact with "the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost" imparts divine wisdom and bliss

Jesus further stated that the Christ-imbued Cosmic Vibration would not only give them great comfort and bliss, but would bring them the knowledge of all things and recall from their memory the wisdom he had implanted within them, for the Holy Ghost is the source of all materialised creation and hence of all earthly and astral wisdom. It was that Cosmic Vibration which manifested in the disciples on the day of Pentecost:

> *And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.*
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> *And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven. Now when this was noised abroad,*

the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language. And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, "Behold, are not all these which speak Galileans? And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born?"...Others mocking said, "These men are full of new wine."

But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, "Ye men of Judea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words: For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day. But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; 'And it shall come to pass in the last days [the culmination of divine realization], saith God, I will pour out of My Spirit upon all flesh....And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved'" (Acts 2:1–21).

In this experience, the apostles received baptism in the Holy Ghost Cosmic Vibration, the great Amen or *Aum* ("a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind"), which had been promised to the faithful disciples by Jesus.* It bestowed on them the awakening of the spiritual eye: "There appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them"—the cleft rays of life energy, pranic light, emanating from the astral centre in the medulla oblongata (*ajna chakra*) converged into the single divine eye of superconscious perception ablaze in their foreheads.

The astral centre in the medulla is the switch that transmits life-force currents into the two physical eyes. These two currents, concentrated outward through the physical eyes, empower their perception of the material world. When the eyes are upturned, their gaze fixed at the point between the eyebrows in meditation, they become supernaturally still; then the bifurcated life currents flowing from the medullary centre into the two eyes converge as one at the Christ-*Kutastha* centre, producing the vision of the luminous single eye. Penetrating the inner portals of this astral eye of light, one can cognize, successively, all physical, astral, and ideational qualities and vibrations of the Holy Ghost realm of Cosmic Nature; Christ Consciousness reflected in that universal sphere; and Spirit beyond all form and vibration.

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* Acts 1:5 (see Discourse 69).

The Holy Ghost Cosmic Vibration, being the source of all sounds and hence of every language, enabled the disciples to speak in diverse tongues. The ultimate wisdom in Cosmic Vibration appears in advanced devotees as one intuitive feeling. These devotees in ecstatic communion with the Cosmic Vibration can translate this intuitive feeling into any language, not only the one they have been used to since birth. Every baby, before he becomes familiar with a particular language and learns to vocalize it, is already equipped with thought and sensations. Babies throughout the world cry out in the same language and same sounds. Sensations of light, sound, smell, taste, and touch produce certain thought perceptions and the baby tries to express those thoughts in language.

In tune with the Cosmic Source of all sound, the disciples could speak in any language

Universal emotions of pain and joy, love, anger, all such feelings, were originally expressed in the same language. Gradually, mispronunciation, geographical separation, and climatic conditions with their influence on the bodily instrument of speech, gave rise to diverse languages. Yet at the bottom of these languages is a commonality of sensation and thought.

God, and His emanations of Christ Consciousness and Cosmic Vibration, are the conscious intelligent forces behind the consciousness of all beings. Having no constraints of evolutionary verbiage, these Intelligences instantly know and decipher the thoughts and languages of the different nations of the earth. Any devotee who is as advanced as the disciples of Christ, and can in a state of ecstasy tune in with the Cosmic Vibration, can likewise know the thoughts of all men and translate them into any language. This is how the disciples on the day of Pentecost, being filled with the Holy Ghost, manifested omniscient knowledge and could vocalize their thoughts in diverse tongues.

"Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. Ye have heard how I said unto you, 'I go away, and come again unto you.' If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, 'I go unto the Father': for my Father is greater than I.

"And now I have told you before it come to pass, that, when it is come to pass, ye might believe. Hereafter I will not talk

much with you: for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me. But that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do. Arise, let us go hence" (John 14:27–31).*

Unlike the world, which gives only perishable things, Jesus left with his disciples imperishable Christ-peace. That peace he gave to all who were able to attain it, so that they could enjoy it always in meditation and ecstasy.

"My peace I give unto you": Let not your heart be troubled or afraid

The heart is the centre of the emotions, so Jesus referred to it in telling his disciples to keep their feelings free from the roiling vibrations of restlessness and fear, so that the lake of consciousness might remain calm to reflect the Christ Consciousness without distortion. He then reminded them, as he had told them before, of his departure and return (his impending crucifixion and resurrection), and of the final dissolving of his body into Spirit, from which time on his Christ Consciousness would manifest in each devotee's meditating consciousness.† He added that if they loved the Christ Consciousness in him, they would rejoice for his sake because he was going to be reunited with the Cosmic Consciousness, absolute liberation in Spirit, greater than his incarnate state of universal Christ-*Kutastha* Consciousness.‡

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* Though Jesus concludes by saying "Arise, let us go hence," his discourse to the disciples at the Last Supper continued, as recorded in Chapters 15–17 of St. John's Gospel (to be commented on in Discourses 71 and 72).

† Cf. John 16:7 (Discourse 71): "Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you."

‡ The Bhagavad Gita speaks of the devotee's perception of Transcendental Spirit, higher than communion with the Christ-*Kutastha* Intelligence that informs creation and embodied Sons of God:

"There are two Beings (Purushas) in the cosmos, the destructible and the indestructible. The creatures are the destructible, the *Kutastha* is the indestructible. But there exists Another, the Highest Being, designated the 'Supreme Spirit'—the Eternal Lord who, permeating the three worlds, upholds them.

"I (the Lord) am beyond the perishable (Prakriti) and am also higher than the imperishable (*Kutastha*). Therefore, in the worlds and in the Veda (the intuitive perception of undeluded souls) I am proclaimed Purushottama, the Uttermost Being.

"Whosoever, freed from delusion, knows Me thus as the Supreme Spirit, knows all, O Arjuna. He worships Me with his whole being" (*God Talks With Arjuna: The Bhagavad Gita* XV:16–19).

"I have prophesied to you about the things that will come to pass, that when they happen it will strengthen your faith in the truth of whatsoever I have said to you. I have told you everything necessary, and thus hereafter I will not talk much to you; for now I must be ready for the great ordeal. Christ Consciousness, the prince of cosmic creation, is manifesting fully in my consciousness and absorbing my human consciousness—leaving little power for outward expression in words. The Christ Consciousness in me will manifest such actions as would declare my utmost love for the Father. And as the Father, Cosmic Consciousness, revealed ideal wisdom within me, so I reveal to you that wisdom, the commandments and laws that should govern your actions."

When Jesus said, "I go away, and come again unto you," and also in the several references in preceding verses—"I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter....I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you....He will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and We will come unto him....the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things"—Jesus clearly assures his disciples that the passing of his body was not the end of his relationship with them. Instead, Jesus was describing himself as not the body but omnipresent Christ Consciousness. Uncircumscribed by the physical body, the real body of Jesus is the Holy Ghost manifested as Cosmic Vibratory Creation, and the soul of Jesus is the Christ Consciousness present in all creation.

Through yoga techniques of meditation on Aum, one receives the Second Coming of Christ

Jesus conveyed to his disciples that even though he would appear to them after resurrection in the physical body, still that was not the real Second Coming of Christ. The Second Coming is possible when any devotee expands his consciousness by deep meditation and can feel the body of Jesus as the Cosmic Vibration or Holy Ghost, and the spirit of Jesus as the Christ Consciousness. Many who saw Jesus after resurrection did not realize the true Spirit-essence of Jesus. They were satisfied to behold Jesus' spirit materialised as the familiar human body of the Master. So it is today with all who utter prayers to the Holy Ghost and Christ without ever realizing them in their consciousness. They are satisfied with ceremonies that they believe bring the contact of Holy Ghost and Christ. But earnest devotees who by a specific scientific yoga technique of meditation on *Aum* contact the Holy Ghost as the most blissful, all-comforting, all-sorrow-destroying Cosmic Sound truly know what

Holy Ghost means. Advanced devotees who not only hear in meditation the blissful cosmic sound of the Holy Ghost, the Word, the holy *Aum* vibration, but merge their consciousness in the omnipresence of this sound, and feel the universal Christ Consciousness in it, they are the ones who witness the second coming of Christ in their consciousness. Though Jesus can and has informed Christ Consciousness to appear in his Jesus-form to God-realized saints, it is neither necessary nor a fact that Jesus will appear in body again before souls can be redeemed. When he manifests as the Cosmic Sound and the Christ Consciousness in the devotee, then that is the true redeeming Second Coming of Christ of which Jesus spoke.

As a human being has a soul, mind, and body, so also God is the inactively active soul of the universe, Christ Intelligence is the active mind of God planning and guiding the work in creation, and the Cosmic Vibration materialised as the physical cosmos is the physical body of God. Any devotee who wants to bring Christ Intelligence a second time in his consciousness and through that Christ-wisdom reach the Father, or the Cosmic Consciousness, must first master the technique of communing with the Holy Ghost Cosmic Sound, and then realize the Christ Intelligence in it. Simply believing in the Trinity could not give anyone the God-realization of Cosmic Consciousness.

The Holy Ghost Cosmic Vibration appears to the devotee during meditation as Cosmic Light, Cosmic Sound, Cosmic Joy, and Cosmic Wisdom. The devotee must not be satisfied to be merely an observer of these inner glories, thinking thereby that everything has been attained. When the devotee can see the divine Light spread over the whole cosmos, feel the Sound of *Aum* thrumming throughout the cosmos, merge in the Joy in every atom and particular of the universe, intuit the wisdom of Christ Intelligence in every speck of space, then he has communion with the Holy Ghost. This contact of Holy Ghost will be found by the advanced student to be an Incomparable Comforter, giving inner freedom from physical, mental, and soul miseries, and awakening in the soul the intuitive omniscience of Christ-wisdom—as was promised and emphasized by Jesus.

[An ecstatic experience of Paramahansa Yogananda in communion with the Holy Ghost Cosmic Vibration of Aum:]

"When sensory perceptions vibrate their pleasures in the body, I experience a heaviness; a weighty load hangs on the bosom of my soul, and I feel drawn down to matter. But, O elevating *Aum,* when Thou dost vibrate within me, oh, what exultant joy and lightness I feel. I soar above the body. I am drawn toward Spirit. O great *Aum,* rolling ocean of *Aum,* vibrate long within me so that I may remain awake to Thine infinite presence, broadened into identity with the Universal Spirit. Oh, this is the Voice of Heaven. This is the Voice of Spirit. *Aum,* Thou art the source of all life, of all expressions of creation in the universe. So let me feel Thee, O great Mother Vibration, rolling within me as a part of Thy Cosmic Self. Receive me; make me one with Thee. Never leave me; be always rolling within me like a mighty spiritual ocean, calling to me and revealing Thine oceanic presence. O Mighty Vibration, O Mighty Truth that percolates through every atom of my flesh, peace and harmony eternal, bliss and wisdom eternal, come with Thy presence, with Thy universal resonance! Oh, these tiny joys, these tiny tonics of sensual vibrations, I wish to forsake. Enfold me in Thy vibration and carry me along with Thy rolling sound. Let me be free from the bondage of flesh; let me roll on with Thine infinite vibratory ripples of omniscient joy, O great *Aum.* Be with me, possess me, absolve me in Thee."

DISCOURSE 71

"Abide in Me.... Continue Ye in My Love"

The Last Supper, Part III

"Abide in Me": Know by Realization
That You Are Sustained by the Immanent Divinity

❖

How a God-realized Guru Elevates the Consciousness
of His Disciples to His Own Level

❖

Those Who Contact the Holy Ghost Cosmic Vibration
Are the Real "Witnesses" of Truth

❖

Jesus Prepares His Disciples to Carry On
Without His Physical Presence

❖

All Knowledge and Joy Come to Those
Who Commune With the Comforter in Meditation

"What love could be greater than the love that Jesus expresses here?... Human love requires human meriting and is subject to whims of feeling; but God's love is unconditional, eternal, unchanging."

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit He taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, He purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.

"If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.

"As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love. If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in His love. These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.

"This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you. Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, He may give it you.

"These things I command you, that ye love one another. If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you

out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, 'The servant is not greater than his lord.' If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also. But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not Him that sent me.

"If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloak for their sin. He that hateth me hateth my Father also. If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father. But this cometh to pass, that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, 'They hated me without a cause.'

"But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me: And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning.

"These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended. They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service. And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me. But these things have I told you, that when the time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them. And these things I said not unto you at the beginning, because I was with you.

"But now I go my way to Him that sent me; and none of you asketh me, 'Whither goest thou?' But because I have said these things unto you, sorrow hath filled your heart. Nevertheless I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they believe not on me; of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.

"I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you.

"A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me, because I go to the Father."

Then said some of his disciples among themselves, "What is this that he saith unto us, 'A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me': and, 'Because I go to the Father'?" They said therefore, "What is this that he saith, 'A little while'? We cannot tell what he saith."

Now Jesus knew that they were desirous to ask him, and said unto them, "Do ye enquire among yourselves of that I said, 'A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me'? Verily, verily, I say unto you, that ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy.

"A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world. And ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.

"And in that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, He will give it you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full. These things have I spoken unto you in proverbs: but the time cometh, when I shall no more speak unto you in proverbs, but I shall shew you plainly of the Father.

"At that day ye shall ask in my name: and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you: For the Father Himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God. I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father."

His disciples said unto him, "Lo, now speakest thou plainly, and speakest no proverb. Now are we sure that thou knowest all things, and needest not that any man should ask thee: by this we believe that thou camest forth from God."

Jesus answered them, "Do ye now believe? Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me. These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."

—John 15:1—16:33

DISCOURSE 71

"Abide in Me.... Continue Ye in My Love"

The Last Supper, Part III

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit He taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, He purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned" (John 15:1–6).

The Christ Consciousness, with which Jesus was perfectly identified ("I am"), is the "true vine" of cosmic life and substance, with infinite branches from which hang the clusters of universes, planetary and stellar systems, atoms and electrons, and all created things. This vine of Christ Consciousness is planted and cultivated by the almighty "Husbandman," the supreme Cosmic Consciousness of the Father-Creator, in the garden of Cosmic Vibration; it has shoots running into the tiniest specks of all forms of matter, energy, and life force. The Cosmic Consciousness removes and then reforms, through death

and rebirth, anything or any being that, owing to ignorance or some other cause, does not bear the fruit of proper manifestation. And with the sickle of spiritual tests, the Cosmic Consciousness prunes every branch of human intelligence whose maturity brings forth the choice fruits of wisdom, that by such husbanding it might produce more abundantly divine realization, love, and bliss.

"Abide in me": Know by realization that you are sustained by the immanent Divinity

The disciples of Jesus were very fortunate because he had cleared their consciousness of the evil karma and wrong vibrations of incarnations through "the word which I have spoken unto you"—the all-comforting Cosmic Vibration, which he had caused to manifest within them. He now urged them, on this last evening spent with them before his crucifixion, to continue to abide in the consciousness he manifested while he was with them, that even after the passing of his physical form that consciousness could continue to abide in them and ensure their salvation. No devotee can mature the fruits of wisdom (knowledge of God) as an isolated self, a branch of human consciousness cut off from the vine of omnipresent Christ Consciousness. But any devotee who practises meditation and repeatedly attains ecstatic communion—feeling himself by intuitional realization abiding in the Christ Consciousness, and that Christ Intelligence manifesting in him—draws into himself Its immortal-life power that nurtures the growth of the fruits of imperishable wisdom and divine bliss.

It is clear that Jesus was not speaking as a man, nor intimating that the beginning and the end of God's manifestation on earth coincided with the birth and passing of his body. He spoke from the realization that the Christ Consciousness within him was the same universal guiding Intelligence of the Infinite Cosmic Energy that lights the lamps of atoms and all lives. Thus he could say of his universal self, "Without me ye can do nothing." To some degree, the power of universal Christ Consciousness is manifested in all persons, for without conscious or unconscious contact with the Christ Consciousness hidden behind ordinary human consciousness, man could not live, breathe, see, hear, smell, taste, touch, think, will, or feel, let alone produce the fruits of Self-realization.

Jesus' exhortation to his disciples to "abide in me....for without me ye can do nothing" declared to them the way to gain their salvation. In the Bhagavad Gita, this empyrean truth is similarly proclaimed

by Sri Krishna, who likewise speaks from oneness with the Universal Christ (Krishna) Consciousness: "Those who venerate Me, giving over all activities to Me (thinking of Me as the Sole Doer), contemplating Me by single-minded yoga—remaining thus absorbed in Me—indeed, O Arjuna, for these whose consciousness is fixed in Me, I become before long their Redeemer to bring them out of the sea of mortal births. Immerse thy mind in Me alone; concentrate on Me thy discriminative perception; and beyond doubt thou shalt dwell immortally in Me."*

In saying, "If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered," Jesus meant that it is not sufficient that Christ Consciousness sustains all human beings; each must *know,* by conscious realization through intuitive perception in meditation, that he is sustained by that immanent Divinity. Persons who live in obliviousness of the Source that maintains their lives eventually find their happiness withered due to lack of spiritual communion, just as an isolated branch shrivels away because it does not receive nourishing sap from the vine of which it is a part. Spiritually desiccated through lack of conscious connection with Christ Consciousness, such ignorant materialists are "cast into the fire, and they are burned"—not consigned to destruction in some mythical hellfire, but temporarily tormented in the self-created searing flames of misery kindled and fed through wrong living. But throughout his teachings Jesus also gives assurance that even materialistic individuals, no matter their present suffering in the hades of delusion, can be saved by good company, meditation, loyalty to a worthy guru, and communion with Christ Consciousness.

"If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.

"As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love. If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in His love. These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full" (John 15:7–11).

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* *God Talks With Arjuna: The Bhagavad Gita* XII:6–8.

66 If your consciousness is in tune with my Christ Consciousness and the emanations of Cosmic Vibration coming from me, you will be able to accomplish whatever you wish due to your will working through the Cosmic Intelligence and Cosmic Vibratory Energy, the creative Word of God."

Jesus promised his disciples that "if ye abide in me, and my words abide in you"—if their consciousness were perfectly in tune with the Christ Consciousness and Its emanations of Cosmic Vibration—they would be able to demonstrate untold wonders through operating the universal creative principle. Any devotee, of any era, who is in tune with Christ Consciousness materialises the glory and wisdom of Cosmic Consciousness (the Father) hidden in and beyond all creation. Those who would discipline their consciousness for expansion into Christ Consciousness—such were considered by Jesus to be his real disciples.

Then Jesus spoke to them precious words, none dearer to the devotee's heart, that he loved them with the same divine, impartial, undying love with which the Heavenly Father loved him. Even as he felt God's love within himself always, so would they abide always in God's love flowing through Christ Consciousness if they continued to keep His commandments. What love could be purer; what love could be greater than the love that Jesus expresses here for his disciples? Human love requires human meriting and is subject to whims of feeling; but God's love is unconditional, eternal, unchanging.

"As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you"

Try to imagine the love spoken of by Jesus in these verses. Close your eyes, put your attention on the heart, and feel the greatest love that you ever felt for another person. Let that love saturate every cell of your body. Now expand the feeling of love, like an encircling sphere embracing your family, friends, all your loved ones. Feel your love ever increasing; include in that sphere all the people in your city, then all of your country. Now everything in the world is bathed in that love. The whole earth, the solar system, the far-flung galaxies and island universes—everything is floating in this vast sphere of love. Feel, meditate on, merge yourself in that love which permeates and upholds the infinitudes of manifestation—a demonstrable presence of God's heartbeat of bliss, setting the pace of cosmic harmony and unity, and known to the devotee as the All-in-all fulfilment.

The love felt in the heart at the beginning of this visualization is human love. And the love that expanded until it encompassed everything is the universal love of Christ, the infinite love of God. The love that most persons feel for dearest family and friends, Jesus felt for the whole world and every living being. The Christ Consciousness that encompasses everything in its love was born in the body of Jesus, in the body of Krishna, in the body of Buddha.

Only one who has had the perception of the Infinite can fathom that indescribable love of God that suffuses all creation—the Christ-love, the divine power of attraction that draws all beings into an ever greater harmony and ultimately reunites them with God. It is a love unflawed by any selfishness or physicality or mortal instinct, uncircumscribed by the limitations that taint even the grandest human love. The love that dwells in the souls of all creatures—the sum and perfection of the love of all mothers, all fathers, all friends, all lovers—that is Christ-love: the love of the Father reflected in the consciousness of Jesus and every God-united master.

To feel that soul-love of all pure hearts is to be transported in an ecstasy of joy so great, so overwhelming, that it cannot be contained—a charge of bliss passing through one's being, a thousand million volts of rapturous power. This divine emotion is beyond description—a communion of unutterable sweetness with the Infinite Grace, the Indescribable Glory, the Eternal Protection. That is the love of God which Jesus felt, and in which he sheltered his disciples: "As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love."

Jesus wanted to be sure that when his body passed away the disciples would continue to be aware of the divine love he had helped them to feel within their hearts. Many kindle a little light of desire for God and then fail to give it fuel, and the fire dies. The flame of love and yearning must be fueled again and again with daily practice of meditation and self-discipline. Jesus pointed out that any devotee would be able to abide in the unending divine love in the bosom of Christ Consciousness and God by following the laws of God he had emphasized: primarily, as he himself had demonstrated to them, by loving God as the joy of meditation, with all the heart's devotion, mind's concentration, soul's intuition, and body's "strength" (withdrawing the energy from the senses to focus the attention on Him); and loving Him as present in

"Continue ye in my love": Fulfil the two foremost laws of love for God and neighbour

the souls of all living creatures ("neighbours," all those one happens to meet).*

By keeping those two foremost commandments of the Father, Jesus, and all liberated devotees, abide eternally in the Lord's unending, ever joyous, ever new love. "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full": The truths by which the disciples would be able to abide in Christ-love were vibrated by Jesus into their receptive consciousness through the Holy Ghost Cosmic Vibration, that God's ever new Bliss present in him and omnipresent in the Cosmic Vibration might remain with them permanently after his body had been dissolved in Spirit. He wanted them, through the unshakable communion attainable by deepest meditation, to transmute the conditional joy of their current stage of realization into the full, absolute joy of Spirit.†

The Gospel preserves a record of Jesus' words on this holy occasion; but readers should realize—and try to feel within themselves as though they, too, were present—that behind those words was the tangible vibratory presence of God. During times of divine fellowship (*satsanga*) such as Jesus' Last Supper with his disciples, those who are receptive feel transported into a higher consciousness of God-perception pouring into their hearts and minds as the master speaks. This attunement imbues the devotee's consciousness, in the highest way, whenever he summons the guru's grace in the inner temple of deep, worshipful meditation.

"This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have

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* See Discourse 53, "Fulfilling the Two Greatest Commandments."

† "Yogis not yet free from the world revolve back again (to the world) even from the high sphere of Brahma (union with God in *samadhi*). But on entering into Me (the transcendental Spirit) there is no rebirth!...By single-hearted devotion, O Arjuna, that Supreme Unmanifested is reached. He alone, the Omnipresent, is the Abode of all creatures" (*God Talks With Arjuna: The Bhagavad Gita* VIII:16, 22).

> *made known unto you. Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, He may give it you" (John 15:12–16).*

Repeatedly in this final dissertation addressed to his disciples, Jesus emphasized his loving command to them: "Love one another with the divine, unconditional love with which I have loved you." He wanted them to uphold the ideal of love in its most sublime human aspect: divine friendship.

The highest form of human love: divine friendship between a guru and his disciples

Friendship is the purest human expression of God's love, because it springs not from any dictates of biological or social instincts but from the free-will choice of the heart. All other forms of love—between parent and child, husband and wife, brother and sister, lover and beloved, master and servant—are partially motivated by instinctive compulsions and prospect of selfish gain, and, as such, are imperfect. Blood relatives are imposed upon an individual, but one is free to choose his friends. The love of friends, which grows from the spontaneous mutual attraction of hearts, affords the possibility of a relationship truly based on unselfishness; it therefore more nearly approximates the perfect love—that between God and His devotees, between soul and Spirit.

It was that consummate, unselfish love which Jesus bestowed on his disciples by addressing them as friends, souls whom he highly esteemed. Poignantly, facing his own death on the morrow, he affirmed to them: "Greater love hath no man than that he sacrifice his life for the highest good of his friends." Such friendship is truly of God, for purely selfless sacrifice is possible only when human love partakes of God's love. When one can express the almighty power of intoxicating divine love, it awakens the living heart of God's love in the lives of others.

The preeminent instinct in man is to love himself first. When there is danger of any kind, one's first impulse is to save oneself. Spirituality begins with the effort to place the well-being of someone else above one's own interests. The smallness of ego's self-centredness must be resurrected into the largeness of caring and self-sacrifice, by which others are felt as a part of one's own expanded self. The friendship of

close human relationships all too often degenerates through overfamiliarity or taking selfish advantage of one another. But in divine friendship each one thinks only of the highest welfare of the other; that was the friendship Jesus demonstrated.

The supreme expression of friendship is the relationship between a true guru and his disciples. In a Christlike guru, the love of God Himself is made manifest in human form. In the pure love of friends one glimpses God the Invisible made partially visible, but in the guru He becomes manifest in actuality. Through the guru, God the Silent talks openly. What greater satisfaction could one have, than when the heart is aflame with yearning for the unknown God and He actually comes as guru? What greater consolation could one receive, than to find that when one's devotion is strong and incessant the Inconceivable Infinite manifests in the visible form of guru? God commingles His desire for the devotee's liberation with the desire of the guru to help the disciple forsake the ways of darkness and follow the illumined path to God. He who follows a God-sent guru walks in the everlasting light of God. The Silence becomes expressive through the voice of guru; the Intangible becomes tangible in the God-realization of guru.

How a God-realized guru elevates the consciousness of his disciples to his own level

The unconditional divine friendship between guru and disciple, the most sacred of all human loves, is the love of which Jesus spoke in calling his disciples, not servants or inferiors, but friends. When he told them, "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you," he signified that those who follow the Christ commandments of meditation and self-discipline, and thereby attain God-consciousness, he would call friends, accepted on the basis of divine equality, for the Christ Consciousness in him and which is manifested in all awakened souls was one and the same.

Devotees who by transparent purity of mind and heart receive and reflect the impartially shining sunlight of God's love are true sons of God. Jesus knew that disciples who would follow his commandment to "love one another, as I have loved you"—who could feel the love of God in all—would find their consciousness transmuted into Christ Consciousness. To those who were in tune with him, he had conveyed "all things that I have heard of my Father"—transmitted the wisdom vibrations he received from Cosmic Consciousness. Therefore he would henceforth not speak of his advanced disciples as "servants"—those who serve the Master but are ignorant of the ways

of the Master (the Christ Consciousness, the Lord of all creation)—but as divine friends who shared with him the knowledge of Christ Consciousness.*

Souls in the divine kingdom are equal in God-realization and hence enjoy equally the fulfilment of infinite happiness. But people in the kingdom of the earth are draped in delusions of inequalities and fraught with jealousy, trouble, and discontentment. Souls who have overcome delusion and have attained the complete enlightenment of Self-realization are honoured in the divine kingdom as equals in the eyes of God; only ignorant disciples argue the superiority of some masters over others. (Of course, there are differing degrees of Self-realization of advancing devotees; but once they reach the pinnacle state of liberation in Cosmic Consciousness, there is no longer any difference. Completely liberated prophets of different religions cannot be accurately judged according to the outer expressions of wisdom they give for a particular clime and time, for inwardly they possess the same Self-realization and God-consciousness.)

Jesus earlier had said, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him." The guru does not call any soul to himself. It is God who calls. God uses the vehicle of the guru to bring the devotee to eternal freedom. Thus Jesus pointed out that the disciples did not choose him, but that, in response to their prayers of many lives and to the will of the Heavenly Father, his particular incarnation of Christ Consciousness had been chosen to guide them in the soul path. They did not know that he was coming to them, but he came intentionally, as their God-sent guru, for the sake of their souls' liberation.

Acting in accord with the command of God, Jesus recognised and consciously selected the disciples; that is why he said, "I have chosen you, and ordained you...." That is, "My Christ Consciousness has chosen to guide you through my form called Jesus, and to saturate you with divine ardour by means of which you will be able to go into deep

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* That divine friendship and love was sublimely expressed in the relationship between the avatar Bhagavan Krishna and his beloved disciple Arjuna, recounted in the epic *Mahabharata* and specifically in the holy Bhagavad Gita. Imparting to Arjuna knowledge of the timeless science of God-union revealed in India countless millennia ago, Lord Krishna said:

"I have this day informed thee about that same ancient yoga, for thou art My devotee and friend. This sacred mystery (of yoga) is, indeed, the producer of supreme benefit (to mankind)" (*God Talks With Arjuna: The Bhagavad Gita* IV:3).

ecstasy and bring forth the flawless fruit of wisdom, wisdom that will remain with you forever. For when you are in tune with my Christ vibrations and you ask from Cosmic Consciousness whatever you want through me, that you shall receive."

"These things I command you, that ye love one another. If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, 'The servant is not greater than his lord.' If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also. But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not Him that sent me.

"If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloak for their sin. He that hateth me hateth my Father also. If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father. But this cometh to pass, that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, 'They hated me without a cause'" (John 15:17–25).

In exhorting his disciples to love one another with his all-freeing Christ-love while carrying out his commandments as his apostles, Jesus was warning them of the importance of being united in the power of divine love when they would be the objects of resentment of *maya*-deluded individuals. If persons who were worldly hated them, it was because of the disciples' spirituality; such persons had already fixed their hearts on hatred of truth and Jesus and would no doubt extend that enmity to his followers. If the disciples had been predominantly materially minded, the masses would have accepted them as kindred spirits. But their interests and values were of a higher order, "not of the world," for Jesus had chosen to guide them out of worldliness. Therefore he prophesied that they would be reviled, solely because they were "different."

All spiritual aspirants meet with resistance from deluded worldly minds

Jesus reminded the disciples of a previous lesson: "The servant is not greater than his lord";* and said that since worldly people had persecuted him, the master, they would also persecute his disciples. While persons who lived Jesus' teachings would also be willing to follow the spiritual advice of his ordained disciples, those who were inimical to Jesus and the truth he preached would persecute his followers for manifesting his Christ vibrations and bliss—"for my name's sake"—because they did not know that the consciousness in him was the reflection of God's Cosmic Consciousness—the reflection of "Him that sent me."

Jesus then took up a point that has since caused much theological discussion and has often been grossly misinterpreted. "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin....If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin...." To understand his words one must keep in mind the meaning of "sin" and "evil."

Sin means ignorance, individual delusion (*avidya*). It is the misuse of free choice, influenced by the cosmic delusion of satanic evil, to perform those actions that take man away from the kingdom of God. The sins of most persons are worldly; few are categorically evil. To be worldly means being foolish, giving undue importance to materiality and gratification of the senses, and staying away from God out of ignorance. But outright evil is a deliberate sin of turning one's back on the Lord. It was that sin which Jesus condemned in those who witnessed the divine manifestation in his life, and yet rejected him and his message from God.

Difference between sin (ignorance of God) and evil (rejection of God)

These verses certainly do not imply that the ignorant people of the world were sinless before the advent of Jesus. Rather, if the Christ Consciousness in Jesus had not been made manifest unto the world by his open declaration of his personal realization of the Cosmic Father and demonstrations of God's immanence in the miracles he performed, then the worldly persons who disbelieved in God as manifested in and through Jesus and his teachings—those who "know not Him"—would not have been guilty of the evil of deliberately ignoring God in defiance of such evidence. But after the testimony given by Jesus, and beholding or becoming acquainted with his demonstrations of God's power and

*John 13:16; commented on in Discourse 70. See also Discourse 33 (Luke 6:40) and Discourse 41 (Matthew 10:24).

grace, the people of the world—in his time and for all futurity—would, he declared, have no excuse to hide behind a cloak of ignorance their careless indifference to God and their spiritual duty to Him as the Giver of life's blessings.

If the Lord never manifested Himself and His message on earth through the instrumentality of an avatar, as was Jesus, it would be an understandable error for man to reject God because of having insufficient evidence of His existence and essentiality. This, Jesus tells his disciples, referring to the significance of his own God-given mission. "Since the invisible, silent Almighty God distinctly and abundantly demonstrated Himself and His commandments for self-discipline through me, those who were ignorant before have no excuse now in which to hide their guilt for not following the spiritual path, nor justification for forgetting God on the pretext that He is too elusive, mysterious, unattainable, hidden, or perhaps even nonexistent.

"He that hateth me (that spurns the demonstrations of God's existence and glory shown through my life) hateth my Father also (the Cosmic Consciousness that sent me to earth to declare God's presence in a powerful but humble way)." Jesus knew that through his resurrection the omnipotence of God was to be revealed, while his crucifixion would exemplify the humbleness of God who wants to teach His ignorant, rebellious children by love only. If Jesus had not performed divine miracles to glorify the existence, power, and love of God as no ordinary being ever did or could, then the disbelievers could not have been accused of deliberately shunning God. But after having seen the manifestation of Divinity through Jesus' life, they were guilty of the sin of hating God when they hated Jesus in whom Divinity was templed.

Jesus spoke emphatically, for to ignore God (either wilfully or out of sheer ignorance) is a paramount sin; it is submission to cosmic delusion, the father of all sins and consequential physical, mental, and spiritual discontentments and suffering. To forget God is to lose sight of one's real nature. A soul in ignorance of its inherent divinity remains entangled in incarnations of mortal miseries enforced by unfulfilled desires. In contradistinction, the realization of God fulfils all the desires of the human heart and liberates the soul forever.

Jesus' forewarning to the apostles of the masses' enmity acknowledged fulfilment of the prophecy "that is written in their law, 'They hated me without a cause.'" Usually people despise a wrongdoer for his evil acts, but Jesus was hated for his divine works in the

name of God. It is often the fate of prophets to be vilified for no other reason than that they are saintly, a stark contrast that offends the reigning status quo of the common man.

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> *"But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me: And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning" (John 15:26–27).*

Though materially minded worldly persecutors would attempt to defame him and denounce the evidence of his Christ Consciousness, Jesus gave assurance of irrefutable testimony to be received by the disciples: "When my body will be gone, the Christ Consciousness in me will send to you the great comforting Holy Ghost Cosmic Vibration. In deep meditation, the Bliss of Holy Vibration will be revealed to you as an emanation from my Christ Consciousness and from the Father, or Cosmic Consciousness. Through the all-convincing power of intuition, you will know the Spirit of Truth proceeding from the Father—the Cosmic Consciousness manifesting Itself as the Holy Ghost Cosmic Vibration—and that through its comforting bliss it is declaring the presence of the Christ Consciousness within it."

Those who contact the Holy Ghost Cosmic Vibration are the real "witnesses" of Truth

Jesus repeatedly stresses to his disciples that he is Christ Intelligence and not a physical body, and assures them that when they would feel the Cosmic Vibration of Spirit within them, they would absolutely know that he is the Christ Intelligence existing forever in every timbre of that Holy Vibration.

Jesus declared not only that this truth would be testified by the Holy Ghost—"the faithful and true witness"*—but told his disciples that "ye also shall bear witness": "Your souls will be the witness of these eternal truths, because your souls, being emanations of the Christ Consciousness that is also in me, 'have been with me from the beginning,' when the Infinite engendered Its vibratory effluence."

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* "These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God" (Revelation 3:14).

Jesus Praying in the Garden of Gethsemane

"O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt."

—Matthew 26:39

Jesus endearingly prays to the transcendental Father hidden behind the etheric walls of heaven, just as a favorite son in an earthly family would trustfully entreat his father: "Heavenly Father, as You can do everything, why not take this cup of crucifixion away from me?" But even as he prayed to be spared from the tyrannical workings of Cosmic Delusion, Jesus recognized the promptings of inner weakness and immediately added: "Nevertheless, let not my human will, fearful to meet the trial, be granted; let Your wisdom-guided divine will find fulfillment in my life."

—Paramahansa Yogananda

Painting by Heinrich Hofmann

"From the beginning" signifies the insemination of finite creation. In Spirit there is no beginning and no end. The category of beginning and end applies to the waves of creation that arise on the bosom of the Infinite Ocean and then end in It after the storm of cosmic delusion is withdrawn at the sovereign command of God. Jesus gives assurance that every soul emanated from Christ Consciousness in the beginning of the finite creation of worlds and planets; and that therefore man as a pure soul deserves to be reunited with the Christ Intelligence after seeming separation through long incarnations of delusion. All souls, before delusion or *maya* enshrouded them, knew Christ Intelligence as their Source; and when advanced devotees have freed their souls from delusion, they give testimony of their inseverable forever-connection with Christ Consciousness.

A belief in the Holy Ghost is one thing; actual contact with the Holy Ghost is something else! In the past centuries, great saints such as Francis of Assisi and Teresa of Avila knew the art of contacting the Holy Ghost and the Christ Consciousness and the Cosmic Consciousness—the trifold Unity—by the interiorized intensity of pure devotion.

But by sending the Self-Realization [Yogoda Satsanga] teachings to America, the great Yogavatar Lahiri Mahasaya has given to the world the actual technique of true contact with the Holy Ghost—the all-permeating Cosmic Vibration heard in meditation as the Cosmic Sound of the mighty *Aum* or Amen, and which in the exalted state is attended by indescribable divine comfort in Spirit. Devotees who contact the Holy Ghost Cosmic Vibration, and are filled with its eternal electrifying bliss, are indeed the real witnesses of the Spirit of Truth and knowers of the Infinite Christ.*

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* The illumined mystic Saint John of the Cross (contemporary and supporter of Teresa of Avila) speaks of his own experiences of God as the Holy Ghost in Stanzas 14 and 15 of his sublime *Spiritual Canticle* (the saint's paraphrase and abridgement, with commentary, of the Old Testament "Song of Songs"). In poetic imagery he evokes the blissful communion between the soul and God:

"My Beloved is the mountains,
The solitary wooded valleys, / The strange islands,
The roaring torrents, / The whisper of the amorous gales;
The tranquil night / At the approaches of the dawn,
The silent music, / The murmuring solitude,
The supper which revives, and enkindles love."

Explaining the symbolism, Saint John describes the "roaring torrents" as "a spiritual sound and voice overpowering all other sounds and voices in the world....

"This voice, or this murmuring sound of the waters, is an overflowing so abundant as to fill the soul with good, and a power so mighty seizing upon it as to seem

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"These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended. They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service. And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me. But these things have I told you, that when the time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them. And these things I said not unto you at the beginning, because I was with you.

"But now I go my way to Him that sent me; and none of you asketh me, 'Whither goest thou?' But because I have said these things unto you, sorrow hath filled your heart. Nevertheless I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they believe not on me; of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.

"I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but

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not only the sound of many waters, but a most loud roaring of thunder. But the voice is a spiritual voice, unattended by material sounds or the pain and torment of them, but rather with majesty, power, might, delight, and glory: it is, as it were, a voice, an infinite interior sound which endows the soul with power and might. The Apostles heard in spirit this voice when the Holy Spirit descended upon them in the sound 'as of a mighty wind,' as we read in the Acts of the Apostles....

"*The whisper of the amorous gales*....The whisper of the gales is a most sublime and sweet knowledge of God and of His attributes, which overflows into the understanding from the contact of the attributes of God with the substance of the soul.... Inasmuch as this touch of God greatly satisfies and comforts the substance of the soul, sweetly fulfilling its longing to be received into union; this union, or touch, is called amorous gales, because, as I said before, the perfections of the Beloved are by it communicated to the soul lovingly and sweetly, and through it the whisper of knowledge to the understanding. It is called whisper, because, as the whisper of the air penetrates subtly into the organ of hearing, so this most subtle and delicate knowledge enters with marvellous sweetness and delight into the inmost substance of the soul, which is the highest of all delights."—*A Spiritual Canticle of the Soul and the Bridegroom Christ*, by Saint John of the Cross (trans. David Lewis, 1889).

whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you.

"A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me, because I go to the Father" (John 16:1–16).

Jesus prepares his disciples to carry on without his physical presence

Jesus said: "I am forewarning you about what is to befall you, that you may not be offended and discouraged when trials come to you as tests of your spiritual strength. Your persecutors will put you out of the orthodox congregations; they will even murder some of you, my disciples, thinking they serve God thereby, as though He were bloodthirsty, appeased by the sacrifice of perceived heretics. In their blind ignorance, these religious leaders know nothing of the Father, the wisdom of Cosmic Consciousness, nor of the Christ Consciousness that is fully manifested in me.*

"I have waited until now to tell you of the persecutions that await you, because, so long as I have stayed by your side, God's protection has been ever with you; there was no need for alarm. My Christ Con-

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* Saint Paul, before his conversion by means of a vision of Jesus on the road to Damascus, was among the intolerant fanatics (whose ilk continued through the centuries, as in the Spanish Inquisition and similarly evil persecutions) prophesied in these verses. Paul relates (in Acts 26:10–18):

"Many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them. And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities. Whereupon as I went to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priests, at midday, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them which journeyed with me. And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, 'Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?'...

"And I said, 'Who art thou, Lord?'

"And he said, 'I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.'"

sciousness visibly manifest in this body was with you to protect you from evil by vocal advice and power of my authority.

"But now the Christ Consciousness in me will follow the inner way to Cosmic Consciousness whence it came; my outward embodied mission is nearly over. Yet none of you ask where I am going. Rather, because I have told you about dreadful future happenings, your hearts are filled with fear and sorrow. Even though you are wondering why I depart, seemingly abandoning you to the fury of my enemies, still I have ventured to speak the truth for your own highest good, that you may be better prepared with spiritual fortitude to meet your trials when they come.

"The truth I would impress on you is this: It is to your benefit that my body is taken away from you, for so long as you are attached only to this form, you will not seek my universal formless Self. If my body is not taken away, you will continue to perceive me as this limited form; and the unlimited Cosmic Vibration, imbued with the comforting Christ-wisdom omnipresent in creation, will not be manifest to you. I do not want you to think of me as a little physical body; know my vast body as the whole cosmos emanating from the Cosmic Vibration of the Holy Ghost, and my soul as the Christ Consciousness present in every cell of my Cosmic Vibratory Body. The little body that holds your attention now will go away, and your minds will be able to concentrate on and receive *Aum,* the Holy Ghost—the bestower of everlasting comfort by removing from within you all wrong vibrations of delusion.

"Because my little physical body is departing, I will manifest within you in my Christ and my Cosmic Consciousness; the Vibration of *Aum* will dislodge all your grief and fear. In the state of omniscient consciousness that will soon descend on you, you will understand how the divine law (karma) will operate to punish the sin in wicked worldly persons that has made them persecute me and plot to deprive my disciples of the righteousness of my presence among them. They think to judge me, not knowing that the Christ Consciousness in me is the Omnipresent Judge of all men!

"I have yet many truths to reveal to you, which, in your present mortal state of consciousness, you will not be able to grasp. However, when the Spirit of Truth, the Holy Ghost, will manifest in your consciousness, It will guide your minds away from material appearances to truth itself. This Cosmic Vibration does not speak of its own power,

but faithfully transmits the vibrations of the Christ Intelligence present in it. The Holy Ghost will instruct you through visions and through your intuition; it will reveal to you every secret of the past, present, and future. The Holy Ghost Cosmic Vibration manifests fully the wisdom and glory of the Christ Consciousness. The omniscience of the Father or Cosmic Consciousness is also inherent in the Son or Christ Consciousness. Therefore, I have said that the Holy Ghost will transmit to you from me all knowledge which I, in turn, have received from the Father, or Cosmic Consciousness.

"I am present with you now, but in a little while you will not see my body—for that will have been crucified. And again, a little while after crucifixion, you will behold my resurrected body. Whether I appear before you, or disappear from mortal sight, I am ever-living in the Father's Cosmic Consciousness."

In this, his last long discourse with his disciples, Christ reveals many beautiful metaphysical truths. When he said: "I go my way to Him that sent me," he signified, macrocosmically, that the Son or Christ Consciousness in all creation must ultimately be merged in the Father, the supreme Cosmic Consciousness. Similarly, speaking of God-union relative to the microcosm of the individualized soul, "my way" refers to Jesus' earlier declaration, "I am the way...no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."* Jesus was telling the disciples that soon the outward manifestation of his life would be withdrawn into the formless infinite Christ Consciousness immanent in Holy Ghost Cosmic Vibration, and thence into transcendental Spirit ("the Father"; "Him that sent me")—thus following the "way" that all souls must travel to reach the ultimate goal of Cosmic Consciousness.

Why Jesus wanted the disciples to concentrate not on his form, but on his infinite consciousness

Jesus warned his disciples that if they knew him only as the material body, they would suffer when that body would be taken away. If they concentrated only on his little form called Jesus, they would not know his vast Cosmic Body, which consists of countless cells of stars, atoms, ions, and life force of all vibrations. Disciples who would fail to commune with Jesus as Spirit would be rudderless when his body passed away. Disciples who realized Jesus as Spirit would find him to be the same living Lord throughout eternity.

* John 14:6 (see commentary in Discourse 70).

No prophet is allowed by God to remain on earth before the public gaze forever. Mahavatar Babaji has kept his body indefinitely, but he is not permitted to flaunt that special dispensation before the world. That is why he is not available to mankind, except through the silent bestowal of his blessings. Though ever-living, he is ever-hiding.* So is Jesus. Whether with a body or without, liberated souls are ever-living in Spirit. They can openly appear anytime and anywhere they wish, but are not allowed to remain visibly accessible to the masses. God does not permit any master to do that, for it would create a compulsion that would disrupt the cosmic order based on man's free will. People would idolize the phenomenal personality and forget the Spirit. They would attempt to confine God to a human form and complacently neglect to seek His omnipresent, immortal, formless Self. Furthermore, the general populace would flock to that one prophet, but the many who disbelieved in that particular divine aspect would be left behind. God does not want that; through His various emissaries He fulfils His commitment to the needs of all His children on all evolutionary levels. His message, always the same eternal truths, is yet ever new in terms essential to the time and place. As soon as a saint fulfils his own unique mission, God pulls him away to serve from behind the cosmic scene. I have heard great saints in India say, "I am giving too much. God will pull me away." None would presume to tamper with God's ways.

There are millions of Christians who know Jesus the Christ as a divine historical personage; they worship his image and they worship the cross as his symbol. But those who adore Jesus solely as a personality do not know Christ as a saviour. Of the many who call themselves Christians, not all have been accepted by Christ. Those who show the valiancy of spirit and continuity of prayer and meditation necessary to commune with the Infinite Consciousness, they are the accepted ones who know Christ as saviour.

To perceive the formless Christ is the greatest Christ-ianity—to behold not just a man encaged in a little body-frame, but the effulgence of Christ glory spread over the stars and wheeling universes, shining in every atom and throb of vibratory force. The devotee can talk to that Power, and It can take any form to respond. One who feels that Power realizes that God is both personal and impersonal. That

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* See *Autobiography of a Yogi*, Chapter 33.

Power is the conscious, intelligent Light of the world—not of this world alone, but of the whole universe. One who communes with that Light Eternal, that Light which can hear, speak, smell, taste, move, take a form, a thousand forms—that devotee knows the formless Christ. It is the formless Spirit that we should worship, and worshipping Him we become free.*

Jesus in the above verses therefore tells his disciples not to think of him as a body subject to death, but as the eternal Spirit. His body, he says, must be removed in order to free them from the delusion that he was a physical being. Only after the withdrawal of that delusion could his disciples be able to tune in with his vast body of Cosmic Vibration, the great Comforting Holy Ghost.

By these words: "When he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment," Jesus signified that through the omniscient Christ Intelligence inherent in the Holy Ghost Cosmic Vibration, his disciples would receive the spiritual insight that would reveal the karmic consequences of the evil actions of those who had persecuted and judged Jesus and thereby opposed the law of righteousness.

Jesus calls the Holy Ghost "the Spirit of Truth" because it is the essence of all vibratory law as manifested in the cosmos. The Cosmic Vibration is the Invisible Power which, through variations of vibration in accord with cosmic order, materialises and maintains the outward forms of all created things. Jesus explains that the Holy Cosmic Vibration does not declare anything of itself, but faithfully manifests whatever it receives from the guiding Christ Intelligence. In other words, the variations in Cosmic Vibration are created by the Christ

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* Saint Symeon the New Theologian (949–1022), a monk of the Eastern Orthodox Church, wrote: "Having been made rich with Him, they shall see invisibly the inexpressible beauty of God Himself. They shall hold Him without touching. They shall comprehend incomprehensibly His imageless image, His formless form, His shape without shape which, in sight without seeing and in beauty uncompounded, is ever varied and unchanging.

"What is it that, comprehending, they will see? The simple light of divinity, this is what they will see richly with the eyes of their intellect; this what they will also handle, drawn by irresistible love, with immaterial hands; what they will eat without consuming with the spiritual mouth of their intellect and soul. They will never have enough, never be satiated with the contemplation of that beauty, of that sweetness. For, stranger still, the light which wells up in them is always increasing in sweetness and kindling their desire ever the more greatly."—*On the Mystical Life: The Ethical Discourses*, Vol. 2, trans. Alexander Golitzin (Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1996). *(Publisher's Note)*

Intelligence in it. The Holy Ghost Cosmic Vibration does not act of itself (is wholly free from the egoistic principle); it is solely guided by Christ Intelligence.* That is why Jesus says: "For he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak."

When Jesus says: "All things that the Father hath are mine," he signifies that Christ Consciousness is the complete and perfect reflection of Cosmic Consciousness, and that devotees who attain Christ Consciousness by deep meditation receive, further, all the wisdom and power of Cosmic Consciousness. Every human being who discards the consciousness of the limited ego and identifies himself with Cosmic Consciousness will claim as his own possession the universe and all things in it.

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Then said some of his disciples among themselves, "What is this that he saith unto us, 'A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me': and, 'Because I go to the Father'?" They said therefore, "What is this that he saith, 'A little while'? We cannot tell what he saith."

Now Jesus knew that they were desirous to ask him, and said unto them, "Do ye enquire among yourselves of what I said, 'A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me'? Verily, verily, I say unto you, that ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy.

"A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world. And ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.

"And in that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, He will give it you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full. These things have

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* The dichotomy of the creative force into the Holy Ghost Cosmic Vibration—which acts in harmony with the God-reflected intelligence and will of Christ Consciousness—and the nemesis creative force that acts "independently" under the influence of satanic delusion, was explained in the context of Jesus' words in Discourse 7.

I spoken unto you in proverbs: but the time cometh, when I shall no more speak unto you in proverbs, but I shall shew you plainly of the Father.

"At that day ye shall ask in my name: and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you: for the Father Himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God. I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again I leave the world, and go to the Father" (John 16:17–28).

Jesus said: "Are you discussing among yourselves as to what I meant? Verily, by the truth which I foresee, I declare unto you that you will weep and lament when I shall be crucified, while the wicked world will rejoice. But your sorrow will be turned into joy, for you will see me again in flesh and blood after I have been resurrected by the grace of the Heavenly Father.

"You will lament, giving me up for dead; but what rejoicings you will know to find me resurrected! Just as a woman is in pain during childbirth, but forgets the anguish when she sees the new being who has come into the world, so will my disciples be grief-stricken until they behold the miracle of my resurrected body, born out of the travails of my physical suffering. You sorrow now, but your sorrow will vanish and your hearts will rejoice with an irrevocable joy eternal!

"You question among yourselves now, but soon, in your omniscience, you will ask nothing; whatever wisdom you require will be given you from Cosmic Consciousness through the Cosmic Vibration and the Christ Consciousness in it. Up to this time you have not felt the full manifestation of the Holy Ghost, and therefore have not asked anything of it. But in the state of Cosmic Consciousness you will receive all knowledge; you will know the fullness of the joy of Spirit. Hitherto I have had to teach you by words and proverbs. But a time will soon come when I will show you all the wisdom of the Father, which will manifest itself plainly in your consciousness.

All knowledge and joy come to those who commune with the Comforter in meditation

"When the Comforter comes to you and you pray in my name—in oneness with Christ Consciousness in the Cosmic Vibration—my prayers to the Father on your behalf will no longer be necessary. The Father Himself will manifest His Cosmic Consciousness and His love

within you, because you have felt the universal love of the Christ Consciousness in me and have realized that my Christ Consciousness came out of Cosmic Consciousness. I became manifested from the Cosmic Father and I am now in the world; soon I shall leave the world and merge again in the Cosmic Father."

When Jesus said: "Ask the Father in my name, and He will give it to you," he signified that if devotees desire their prayers to be always fulfilled, they must learn to commune with the Cosmic Vibration and the Christ Consciousness in it through deep meditation.*

When he said: "I shall no more speak unto you in proverbs, but I shall shew you plainly of the Father," he gave certainty to divine seekers that those who unceasingly search for God will ultimately commune consciously with Him and meet Him face to face. The mind of the devotee will then no longer be the seeker in the game of hide-and-seek with God played in the labyrinth ("proverbs") of questions and doubts. Jesus assures us that God is real and can be contacted without being hidden behind the screen of mystery and mystical symbolization of the scriptures. This plain declaration given by Christ of contacting the Heavenly Father should inspire every truth-seeker to redouble his efforts and enthusiasm for seizing God, so long concealed behind the veil of intellectualized uncertainties.

His disciples said unto him, "Lo, now speakest thou plainly, and speakest no proverb. Now are we sure that thou knowest all things, and needest not that any man should ask thee: by this we believe that thou camest forth from God."

Jesus answered them, "Do ye now believe? Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me. These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16:29–33).

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* See also Discourse 70, commentary on John 14:14: "If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it."

Jesus now solemnly states: "The hour has come in the drama of my life when through satanic delusion you will all be scattered, every man distractedly thinking of himself, and leaving me alone to suffer. And yet I am never alone, because the Cosmic Consciousness is ever manifest through my Christ Consciousness. These things I have spoken unto you that you might find peace by contacting the Christ Consciousness present within you and within me. In this world you will know persecution, but be of good cheer! later you shall have eternal joy. I have attained that everlasting bliss of the Father by overcoming all temporal pleasures born of worldly desires."

"In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world"

Jesus asked his disciples to be of good cheer because, though they would meet earthly persecution in the beginning, they would merit the eternal life of heavenly perception.

When he said, "I have overcome the world," he sought to strengthen the spiritual determination of his disciples by citing the example of his own victory over the delusions of his human incarnation. Though tempted by Satan and the physical demands of bodily limitations, he overcame every temporal desire by choosing the imperishable bliss of God-consciousness.

Of all such supremely victorious devotees, the Gita says:

> Their thoughts immersed in That (Spirit), their souls one with Spirit, their sole allegiance and devotion given to Spirit, their beings purified from poisonous delusion by the antidote of wisdom—such men reach the state of nonreturn....
>
> The relativities of existence (birth and death, pleasure and pain) have been overcome, even here in this world, by those of fixed equal-mindedness. Thereby are they enthroned in Spirit—verily, the taintless, the perfectly balanced Spirit.
>
> The knower of Spirit, abiding in the Supreme Being, with unswerving discrimination, free from delusion, is thus neither jubilant at pleasant experiences nor downcast by unpleasant experiences.
>
> Unattracted to the sensory world, the yogi experiences the ever new joy inherent in the Self. Engaged in divine union of the soul with Spirit, he attains bliss indestructible.*

* *God Talks With Arjuna: The Bhagavad Gita* V:17, 19–21.

DISCOURSE 72

"Father, I Have Finished the Work Which Thou Gavest Me to Do"

The Last Supper, Part IV (Conclusion)

Jesus Prepares to Dissolve His Consciousness in the Absolute

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"I Have Manifested Thy Name" by Teaching
the Art of Contacting the Holy Ghost in Meditation

❖

Jesus' Intercessory Prayer for His Disciples

❖

The Role of Judas's Past Karma
and His Free Will in Betraying Jesus

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Jesus Identifies His True Followers as Those
Who Contact Christ Consciousness in Meditation

"Jesus, in preparing to leave his body, prayed that all delusion, which he had voluntarily taken on in order to appear in incarnate form, be dissolved from his consciousness, that he might return to absolute oneness with Spirit."

These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, "Father, the hour is come; glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son also may glorify Thee: As Thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given him. And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent. I have glorified Thee on the earth: I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do.

"And now, O Father, glorify Thou me with Thine own self with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was.

"I have manifested Thy name unto the men which Thou gavest me out of the world: Thine they were, and Thou gavest them me; and they have kept Thy word. Now they have known that all things whatsoever Thou hast given me are of Thee. For I have given unto them the words which Thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from Thee, and they have believed that Thou didst send me.

"I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which Thou hast given me; for they are Thine. And all mine are Thine, and Thine are mine; and I am glorified in them. And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to Thee. Holy Father, keep through Thine own name those whom Thou hast given me, that they may be one, as We are.

"While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Thy name: those that Thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled. And now come I to Thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves.

"I have given them Thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

"Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy word is truth. As Thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent

them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.

"Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us: that the world may believe that Thou hast sent me.

"And the glory which Thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as We are one: I in them, and Thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that Thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as Thou hast loved me.

"Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which Thou hast given me: for Thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.

"O righteous Father, the world hath not known Thee: but I have known Thee, and these have known that Thou hast sent me. And I have declared unto them Thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith Thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them."

—John 17:1–26

DISCOURSE 72

"Father, I Have Finished the Work Which Thou Gavest Me to Do"

The Last Supper, Part IV (Conclusion)

These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, "Father, the hour is come; glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son also may glorify Thee: As Thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given him. And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent. I have glorified Thee on the earth: I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do.

"And now, O Father, glorify Thou me with Thine own self with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was" (John 17:1–5).

"O Father, through my Christ Consciousness in communion with Thy Cosmic Consciousness, Thou art telling me that the hour of my trial is nigh. Exalt Thy Son (the Christ Consciousness incarnate in this body called Jesus) with the transcendent power of Thy Cosmic Consciousness, that Thy Son may successfully glorify Thine absolute power and presence as a testimony to the whole world. Heavenly Consciousness, Thou hast imparted to Thy Son, the Infinite

Christ Consciousness, power over all beings and matter, so also that through this flesh of Jesus he may be able through Thy grace to give eternal life to these disciples and all else who are sent to him by Thee.

Jesus prepares to dissolve his consciousness in the Absolute beyond creation

"And this is the eternal life that I desire for them: that by meditation and prayer they attain, through my intercession as their God-sent guru, contact and oneness with the Holy Ghost, the Christ Consciousness within it, and the Cosmic Consciousness of the one and only true Spirit beyond them both, which manifests Itself as the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Through the Christ Consciousness in me, I have declared Thy hidden glory definitely and tangibly to the doubting people of the earth. Heavenly Father, I have finished the work which Thou entrusted to me for the redemption of Thy true lovers.

"And now, O Father, through the limitless power of Thy Cosmic Consciousness, surcharge my Christ Consciousness; make it absolutely one with Thy Cosmic Consciousness as it was originally before the cosmos and the Christ Consciousness in it were separated and projected from Thee. Destroy the limitations of separation by dissolving my Christ Consciousness in Thy Cosmic Consciousness."

Jesus is here referring to the Absolute that exists without the cosmos—the one true ever-existing, ever-conscious, ever newly blissful Spirit. The Spirit was, when nothing else existed. When the Spirit projected vibratory creation out of Itself, It became three—God the Father, or Cosmic Consciousness existing beyond Vibratory Creation; the Cosmic Vibration or Holy Ghost; and the Christ Intelligence or "only begotten Son" working in and through *Aum* or the Holy Ghost. The Cosmic Vibration and the Christ Consciousness in it, being separated from the infinitude of God in the circumscription of the cosmos, became limited in power; Jesus therefore said: "O Father, glorify Thou me with Thine own self, with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was." "Glory" refers to Infinite Power, the Omnipotent Splendour. "Before the world was" signifies before Cosmic Vibration and the Christ Consciousness in it were projected out of God. Jesus here prays for undivided unity with Spirit without any limitation whatsoever. The mere existence of any form of finitude presupposes some degree of the delusion of diminution and separation from God—the workings of *maya* and its laws of duality and relativity. Thus Jesus, in preparing to leave his body, prayed that all delusion, which he had vol-

untarily taken on in order to appear in incarnate form, be dissolved from his consciousness, that he might return to absolute oneness with Spirit and realize the same power his soul possessed before it was projected into embodied separation from the Cosmic Father.

"I have manifested Thy name unto the men which Thou gavest me out of the world: Thine they were, and Thou gavest them me; and they have kept Thy word. Now they have known that all things whatsoever Thou hast given me are of Thee. For I have given unto them the words which Thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from Thee, and they have believed that Thou didst send me" (John 17:6–8).

66 The Christ Consciousness in me has manifested Thy vibratory Name (*Aum;* the Word or Holy Ghost) to the truth-seekers who were selected from out of the worldly people to come to me through Thy grace and the force of their own devout prayers. Those truth-seekers were Thy devotees; Thou hast turned them over to me so that I could tell them about Thy wishes through my tangible human form. Heavenly Father, they have tuned themselves with the Cosmic Vibration and thus have followed Thy wishes in their lives. And now these disciples realize that all wisdom which has been made manifest through my Christ Consciousness originates in Thy Cosmic Consciousness.

"I have manifested Thy name" by teaching the art of contacting the Holy Ghost in meditation

"The Christ Consciousness in me has taught these devotees how by daily meditation to be in tune with the emanations of Thy Cosmic Vibration ("words"), which Thou gavest to the Christ Consciousness to carry on Thy holy work of creation. And since these devotees by expanding their consciousness have experienced the omnipresence of Cosmic Vibration, they have felt the universal Christ Consciousness in it and thus have known that the Christ Consciousness in me came out from Thee—out of Thy Cosmic Consciousness, sent by Thee."

When Jesus says, "They have kept Thy word," he signified that the devotees by tuning in with Cosmic Vibration succeeded in feeling and following the guiding wisdom of God transmitted through the

vibration of the Holy Ghost. It is seldom God's way to speak audible words to the devotee; rather, He vibrates His response to the devotee's intuition through the Holy Ghost Cosmic Sound.

"I have given unto them the words which Thou gavest me, and they have received them," signifies that the devotees by expanding their consciousness and concentration have been able to intuit the guiding wisdom within the Cosmic Vibration emanating from Christ Consciousness and Cosmic Consciousness. Jesus' emphasis on tuning in with the Cosmic Vibration requires every devotee to learn how to attain true communion with the Holy Ghost in deep meditation.

"I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which Thou hast given me; for they are Thine. And all mine are Thine, and Thine are mine; and I am glorified in them. And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to Thee. Holy Father, keep through Thine own name those whom Thou hast given me, that they may be one, as We are" (John 17:9–11).

Jesus' intercessory prayer for his disciples that they may be one with God

66 I specially pray for those who are truly seeking Thee, not for the worldly people who lack interest in knowing Thee. I am praying for the redemption of those whom Thou sent to me for guidance and deliverance to Thy kingdom, for they belong to Thee, owing to their awareness of Thee. All devotees who belong to me belong to Thee; and all who are Thine I also embrace as my own. My Christ Consciousness is glorified in the glory of Thy power manifested in these Thy true devotees.

"And now my body and the manifestation of Christ Consciousness in it will go beyond the reach of men; these truth-seekers will be left in the world of delusion without the inspiration of beholding Thy manifestation in me. So I pray that Thou wilt help them all in my absence. Heavenly Father, keep Thy vibrations of love, wisdom, and bliss present in these disciples that they also may be one with Thee even as I am."

Jesus humanly feels the responsibility for the attainment of his disciples during his absence. He knew that after his departure, Satan would seize on any karmic weakness within them and use it to try to

destroy their spiritual lives. So Jesus makes the fervent plea to the Father: "Thou gavest the disciples to me, they belong to Thee and me, and that is why Thou must protect them from the influence of evil during my absence. For I want successfully to carry out Thy wishes in helping them to save themselves by finishing their earthly karma."

Jesus asks the Father to keep the disciples in His holy presence "through Thine own name"—through the Cosmic Vibration emanating from God, which is heard by the devotees in meditation—that "they may be one, as We are," in attunement and oneness with the intrinsic unity of Christ Consciousness and Cosmic Consciousness. In the manner of a true guru-saviour, Jesus prays that all his disciples enjoy the same divine communion that he has.

> *"While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Thy name: those that Thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled. And now come I to Thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves" (John 17:12–13).*

"While I was present on earth with the disciples, I taught them the method by which they could be in tune with Thy Cosmic Vibration. Those disciples whom Thou sent to me to be taught and redeemed, I have kept in the vibrations of Thy Consciousness; none of them is lost in evil except the one (Judas) who has acknowledged himself the son, the ally, of Satan (Cosmic Delusion). And now the time is come when the Christ Consciousness within me will be united with the Cosmic Consciousness within Thee. These things I announce to the world that the disciples may know my joy and manifest that unending joy of Spirit in themselves and behold Its glory."

When Jesus speaks of Judas as the "son of perdition," he signifies that Judas willingly allied himself with Satan, and left the path of God for the path of delusion.* When Jesus says "that the scripture might be fulfilled," he did not mean that Judas had been selected by some

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* John 13:27 (see Discourse 70).

Cf. also Luke 22:1–6: "Now the feast of unleavened bread drew nigh, which is called the Passover. And the chief priests and scribes sought how they might kill him;

heavenly decree to betray Jesus, but that the intuitive spiritual vision of the scriptural prophets could see into the distant future and observe the mathematical karmic law of cause and effect that would influence the life and betrayal of the prophesied Messiah.

The role of Judas's past karma and his free will in betraying Jesus

Just as a doctor by analysis of the constitution of a baby may predict whether the child will grow to be weak or robust at the age of forty, so Christlike masters by inner vision can discern the exact influence of the effects of already performed actions in men through many incarnations. However, the karmic outcome is conditional on certain circumstances; events can be changed by the interjection of the strong influences of free will and power of yoga concentration. On more than one occasion, Jesus distinctly told Judas that he was going to betray him.* Judas, by the exercise of free will and prayer, could have freed himself from that karmic compulsion to succumb to evil. Jesus did not mention the betrayal to torment Judas, nor to provide him with a justification of inevitability, but to warn him against the treachery that his karma was fomenting within him. Through his omniscient knowledge, Jesus scanned the inner nature of Judas and his karma of past incarnations, and thus lovingly gave Judas a chance to change his malevolent karmic pattern.

Jesus had said: "Woe to that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! Good were it for that man if he had never been born."† Jesus thereby told Judas that he would reap untold misery by choosing to betray him. But Judas was so intoxicated with the delusion of his own preconceived ambitions that he ignored the opportunity to save himself from evil and went ahead with the work of betrayal. It is clearly seen in this drama of events that man is the architect of his own destiny; he is free to act as he pleases, for good or ill.

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for they feared the people. Then entered Satan into Judas surnamed Iscariot, being of the number of the twelve.

"And he went his way, and communed with the chief priests and captains, how he might betray him unto them. And they were glad, and covenanted to give him money. And he promised, and sought opportunity to betray him unto them in the absence of the multitude."

* E.g., "Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil? He spake of Judas Iscariot..." (John 6:70–71; see Discourse 43).

† Mark 14:21 (see Discourse 69).

No matter the greatness of a master, he cannot influence the God-given free will of an individual in order to save him unless that individual wishes to use his free will to help save himself. The guru is constrained to disavow responsibility for any disciple who places himself outside the aura of the guru's grace, until through repentance and reformation—sometimes requiring many lifetimes—the disciple demonstrates his readiness to rejoin the master's liberating presence. When one's delusion-empowered ego becomes one's "guru," even God Himself cannot force open any door of receptivity to truth and divine guidance in a fallen disciple.

Neither Christ nor Satan can influence an individual unless he chooses to be influenced. Judas, through his vastly accumulated evil of past lives and insufficient spiritual effort in this life, was impervious to the holy influence of Jesus. But later Judas did repent of his evil karma and in devastating remorse hanged himself.*

(It must not be inferred that hanging helped Judas to be free from the heinous sin of betraying Jesus, but his self-destruction was evidence of his repentance. Suicide is a very serious spiritual crime. Judas would have done much better had he chosen to live and confirm his repentance in a life of reparation, spiritually expiating his sin by transmuting the evil in his consciousness through redemptory acts of righteousness and devout meditation. Weak-minded people who want to commit suicide are foolishly hoping to get away from manfully shouldering the burden of life through which they free themselves from their bad karma. Suicide only increases the karmic burden instead of banishing it. A troubled person, by meditation and prayer, should patiently work at neutralizing his evil karma by spiritualizing the inner self with soul awakening and God's grace.)

Because of his betrayal of Jesus, Judas had to roam through numerous incarnations to gain his salvation. It was only after twenty centuries that Judas was redeemed in India, through one of the great saints of modern times. Jesus appeared to the saint and sanctioned Judas's release, saying, "His sin is paid for."

The incarnation of Jesus Christ was at a time and place of great ignorance and wickedness among the people around him. He plucked from among the spiritually sincere ones twelve of the best, chosen to be his apostles because he had known and trained them as disciples in

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* Matthew 27:5 (see Discourse 73).

former lives. Now they were to serve as his messengers to work out the will of God during Jesus' last incarnation on earth, and by their spirituality spread his cause into the world.

Why Jesus chose one who would betray him to be among his closest disciples

Judas was one of the twelve because Jesus had accepted him as a spiritual son in a former incarnation. Just as a father does not forsake a wicked son born of his own blood, so a guru cannot forsake a spiritual son who becomes wicked, so long as there remains a possibility to save him from evil. Judas had been a good disciple; but at the end of his former life, just before his death and rebirth as Judas, his mind had become dark with egoistic greed and desire for power, evil temptations to forsake his better nature. Nevertheless, Judas had within him a plenteous store of good karma by which he attracted in his present life the blessing of close association with Jesus.

As a spiritual doctor, Jesus diagnosed the life of Judas as a composite of his good and evil actions and tendencies in many incarnations. He knew of the latent seeds of evil hidden in Judas's subconscious mind, which would dispose him to be the foretold betrayer of the Messiah. Foreknowledge of the potential betrayal did not prevent the magnanimous heart of Jesus from accepting Judas in the divine family of his disciples. In his love for Judas, Jesus gave him an unparalleled opportunity of being better, of overcoming the evil within him in the environment of the Christ in Jesus and the company of his other disciples.

In the life of Jesus, as with that of all divine incarnations who come on earth with a world mission, there was a cosmic drama to be played out between good and evil, God and Satan. The Cosmic Evil Force was arrayed against the manifestation of God in Jesus for what he was going to do to destroy the kingdom of delusion. This conscious force of evil focused on the weakness of Judas to betray Jesus and thereby initiate the events that would lead to the crucifixion of the Christ.

God and Christ in turn knew how Satan could influence Judas through the invitation of his own bad karma. But though the satanic forces of evil would cause the death of Jesus, Christ would attain final victory over the powers of satanic delusion by liberating his soul through the sacrifice of the body, and then by resurrecting his body through the soul power of his freed spirit.

God did not overthrow Evil by the evil of material force. Jesus did not exercise his prerogative to use supernatural force against Satan;

instead, he played out the human drama to demonstrate the spiritual power of good over evil in every man. Resisting evil with evil entangles one in the toils of evil; but overcoming evil by good conclusively brings victory over all evil.

Evil destroys itself. Evil ultimately becomes a tool of God in an indirect way. For evil, trying to destroy good, makes it a martyr and thus immortalizes it.

"All things work together for good to them that love God."* Jesus, by holding with steadfast faith to the unequaled power of God's love during his suffering and death on the cross, transformed the perfidious betrayal of Judas into the occasion of his greatest victory—a supreme demonstration of godliness for the inspiration of humanity. In that sense, Judas may be said to have been Jesus' best "publicity agent," insuring that word of his life and message would be broadcast throughout the world as an example for all mankind for the ages to come.

Jesus continues his prayer to God, interceding for the disciples:

> *"I have given them Thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.*
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> *"Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy word is truth. As Thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth" (John 17:14–19).*

66 These disciples have received Thy wisdom by attunement with Thee through the Cosmic Vibration intuitively felt in meditation. The worldly people have listened to me only with their ears, with no inner perception of truth. Because of their ignorance and wrong living they have hated my followers who are not attached to the false values of the world, even as I am above the temptations of worldly delusion. I do not pray that the disciples be taken from the world into

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* Romans 8:28.

their own salvation, for they yet have work to do in declaring Thy glory; I pray that they be saved from being tempted by delusion while they remain in the world to redeem others through their own exemplary lives. The disciples, having spiritualized their consciousness, do not belong to the domain of the delusive world, even as the Christ Consciousness in me is transcendent, above all cosmic delusion.

Jesus prays that the disciples sanctify themselves through meditation on the Holy Ghost

"Heavenly Father, by the manifestation of the substantial joy of Cosmic Vibration, the Spirit of truth, purify the disciples from any lurking past karmic desires—love for material phenomena or passing earthly pleasures. As the Christ Consciousness incarnate in me has been reflected from Thy Cosmic Consciousness into the cosmos to guide it, so also It has emanated the souls and forms of the disciples and all others into the world. For the sake of the disciples and for setting a true example for them as Thy representative, I have purified my human incarnation of all earthly desires and karmic entanglements. May the disciples also do so by contacting the Spirit of truth, the Holy Ghost, in meditation."

In the above passages, the words "truth" and "word" signify the Holy Ghost, Christ-imbued Cosmic Vibration, which is the quiddity or truth underlying all changeable vibratory phenomena. As the Christ Consciousness emanated from Cosmic Consciousness, so have all beings emanated from Christ Consciousness, informed by Cosmic Vibration. Thus Jesus wanted his disciples to realize the wonder of sanctifying themselves by meditation on the Holy Ghost Spirit of truth, and by following his sanctified life, inspired by his ideal example.

"Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us: that the world may believe that Thou hast sent me.

"And the glory which Thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as We are one: I in them, and Thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that Thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as Thou hast loved me.

"Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which Thou hast given me: for Thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world" (John 17:20–24).

"Neither do I pray for these disciples only, but for truth-seekers of all times—those who will be my followers not in name only but in feeling my Christ Consciousness 'through their word,' through the Cosmic Vibration they feel emanating from the lives of these and future perfected disciples—that all devotees may at last in their common Self-realization become one with Thy Cosmic Consciousness. As Thy Cosmic Consciousness is present in my Christ Consciousness and my consciousness in Thee, I pray that the souls of true devotees also be one in Our consciousness; and that the devotees by reflecting divinity in their own lives may make the disbelieving world realize that Thy Cosmic Consciousness has been glorified through Its manifestation in me.

Jesus identifies his true followers as those who contact Christ Consciousness in meditation

"The glory and the power that I have received in my Christ Consciousness from Thee, I transmit to my disciples that they may be one with Thee even as Thou and I are one. My Christ Consciousness manifest in the devotees and Thy Consciousness manifest in me will make the disciples perfect. I pray that worldly people know that Thy Cosmic Consciousness is manifest in me, and that Thou lovest these disciples, and all the peoples of the world, even as Thou lovest me.

"Heavenly Father, I also pray that the disciples whom Thou sent to me may attain the Christ Consciousness wherein my human consciousness will be dissolved, that they may thus behold the fullness of Thy glory as manifest through me. Heavenly Father, ever hast Thou loved me in the Christ Consciousness since the nascent stirrings of Thy cosmic dreaming ere the world began."

The universal consciousness of Jesus lovingly prays not only for his immediate disciples but for truth-seekers of all generations. He identifies his true followers as those who would believe in him not in name only but through actual contact with Christ Consciousness in the Cosmic Vibration felt in meditation. They are the ones who can be "saved." Jesus also prayed for all the people of the world, that they might know God loves them; and that in sending Jesus to earth, He had manifested through him His divine love.

When Jesus said: "Thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world," he signified that when the Cosmic Vibration and Christ Consciousness were emanated from God, His love was present in Christ Consciousness even before creation became more than a mere concept in the Heavenly Father's cosmic mind.

> *"O righteous Father, the world hath not known Thee: but I have known Thee, and these have known that Thou hast sent me. And I have declared unto them Thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith Thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them" (John 17:25–26).*

66 O Most Just Heavenly Father, Thou art unknown to worldly people who have not contacted Thee; but the Christ Consciousness in me knows Thy Consciousness, and these my disciples are aware that Thou hast sent me and that I did not come on earth for any personal need or motive. I have made Thy Vibratory Presence manifest in the disciples, and through the Christ Consciousness in the Cosmic Vibration I will always declare Thee to all truth-seekers. I pray that the unconditional, all-powerful, ever-intoxicating love with which Thou hast loved me may be manifest in the disciples along with my Christ Consciousness."

In the above words: "I have declared unto them Thy name, and will declare it," Jesus defines the duty of a true guru—one who is sent by God in response to the prayers of sincere devotees—to turn toward God all the devotion awakened in the disciple by the guru's divine personality. The egotistical teacher covets for himself the worship of his students, but the true guru draws reverence from his followers so that he can reinforce it with his intercession and direct that love wholly to God alone.

DISCOURSE 73

Jesus' Agony in the Garden of Gethsemane, and His Arrest

Attuning Human Will to the Wisdom-Guidance of God's Divine Will

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The Importance of Introspective Watchfulness
to Guard the Mind Against Delusion

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Jesus Commends the Attitude of Willingness to Meditate and Pray

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The Divine Friendship of Jesus Persisted
Even in the Face of Severest Provocation

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"All They That Take the Sword Shall Perish With the Sword"

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The Karmically Determined Time
When Satan Could Successfully Assail Jesus

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Meaning of "the Son of Man Coming in the Clouds of Heaven"

"Father, if Thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but Thine, be done."

***When Jesus had spoken** these words, he went forth with his disciples over the brook Cedron, where was a garden, into the which he entered, and his disciples.*

—John 18:1

Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, "Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder."

And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy. Then saith he unto them, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me."

And he went a little farther, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt."

And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, "What, could ye not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, "O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, Thy will be done." And he came and found them asleep again: for their eyes were heavy.

And he left them, and went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words. Then cometh he to his disciples, and saith unto them, "Sleep on now, and take your rest: behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going: behold, he is at hand that doth betray me."

And while he yet spake, lo, Judas, one of the twelve, came, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and elders of the people. Now he that betrayed him gave them a sign, saying, "Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he: hold him fast."

And forthwith he came to Jesus, and said, "Hail, master"; and kissed him.

And Jesus said unto him, "Friend, wherefore art thou come?"

Then came they, and laid hands on Jesus and took him. And, behold, one of them which were with Jesus stretched out his hand, and drew his sword, and struck a servant of the high priest's, and smote off his ear.

Then said Jesus unto him, "Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword. Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and He shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?"

In that same hour said Jesus to the multitudes, "Are ye come out as against a thief with swords and staves for to take me? I sat daily with you teaching in the temple, and ye laid no hold on me. But all this was done, that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled."

Then all the disciples forsook him, and fled. And they that had laid hold on Jesus led him away to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were assembled. But Peter followed him afar off unto the high priest's palace, and went in, and sat with the servants, to see the end.

Now the chief priests, and elders, and all the council, sought false witness against Jesus, to put him to death; but found none: yea, though many false witnesses came, yet found they none. At the last came two false witnesses, and said, "This fellow said, 'I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days.'"

And the high priest arose, and said unto him, "Answerest thou nothing? What is it which these witness against thee?"

But Jesus held his peace. And the high priest answered and said unto him, "I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God."

Jesus saith unto him, "Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven."

Then the high priest rent his clothes, saying, "He hath spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses? Behold, now ye have heard his blasphemy. What think ye?"

They answered and said, "He is guilty of death."

Then did they spit in his face, and buffeted him; and others smote him with the palms of their hands, saying, "Prophesy unto us, thou Christ, who is he that smote thee?"

Now Peter sat without in the palace: and a damsel came unto him, saying, "Thou also wast with Jesus of Galilee." But he denied before them all, saying, "I know not what thou sayest."

And when he was gone out into the porch, another maid saw him, and said unto them that were there, "This fellow was also with Jesus of Nazareth." And again he denied with an oath, "I do not know the man."

And after a while came unto him they that stood by, and said to Peter, "Surely thou also art one of them; for thy speech bewrayeth thee."

Then began he to curse and to swear, saying, "I know not the man." And immediately the cock crew. And Peter remembered the word of Jesus, which said unto him, "Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice." And he went out, and wept bitterly.

When the morning was come, all the chief priests and elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death: And when they had bound him, they led him away, and delivered him to Pontius Pilate the governor.

Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, "I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood."

And they said, "What is that to us? See thou to that." And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself.

And the chief priests took the silver pieces, and said, "It is not lawful for to put them into the treasury, because it is

The Arrest of Jesus

And while he yet spake, lo, Judas, one of the twelve, came, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and elders of the people....Then came they, and laid hands on Jesus, and took him.

—Matthew 26:47, 50

The resentment an ordinary person would feel against someone who harms or maligns him found no entry into the consciousness of Jesus. His calmness, friendliness, love, and all divine qualities never left him, notwithstanding the most severe provocation....

"The bitter cup of the spiritual test that my Father has given me I must drink. But never dare to think that my loving Father would not hear my prayer and leave me helpless; for if I pray, He will instantaneously send more than twelve legions of angels to protect me. But then the scriptural prophecy about the fructification of the law of karma in my life, which I have offered as a ransom for many, would not be fulfilled."

—Paramahansa Yogananda

Painting by Heinrich Hofmann courtesy of the Hessisches Landesmuseum Darmstadtadt

the price of blood." And they took counsel, and bought with them the potter's field, to bury strangers in. Wherefore that field was called, The field of blood, unto this day. Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying, "And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was valued, whom they of the children of Israel did value; and gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord appointed me."

—Matthew 26:36—27:10

DISCOURSE 73

Jesus' Agony in the Garden of Gethsemane, and His Arrest

When Jesus had spoken these words, he went forth with his disciples over the brook Cedron, where was a garden, into the which he entered, and his disciples (John 18:1).

* * *

Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, "Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder" (Matthew 26:36).

Parallel reference:

*And he came out, and went, as he was wont, to the mount of Olives; and his disciples also followed him. And when he was at the place, he said unto them, "Pray that ye enter not into temptation" (Luke 22:39–40).**

66 Pray unto God that you do not misuse your God-given independence by giving preference to the temptations of satanic delusion instead of heeding the voice of God speaking from your soul through your conscience."

* Cf. additional parallel reference in Mark 14:32.

Jesus uses the word "temptation" to denote that state of mind wherein one has become intoxicated with a harmful evil impulse—picturing it as yielding happiness, so blinding himself by this thought that he cannot see in what actions lie his highest good and true, lasting happiness. Jesus warns his disciples to reinforce their will with divine power, accrued from prayer and meditation, that their free will be not swayed and influenced by the insinuations of Satan, knowing that this night would be the beginning of great tests for all of them.

*And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy. Then saith he unto them, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me" (Matthew 26:37–38).**

"So great is my trial that my heart is sorely tested; I am so weighted with sorrow that death here and now would be a welcome release to my soul. Wait here and pray with me; inwardly watch with the intuitive eyes of Christ Consciousness, that satanic delusion may not enter us unnoticed. Be vigilant; with the sword of wisdom, slay at sight any encroaching mental agent of evil."

Jesus' human nature was temporarily tormented by the fearsome prospect of crucifixion

Even with all the wisdom and self-control of his divine nature, the incarnate human nature of Jesus was yet temporarily tormented by the delusion of the fearsome trial of crucifixion he was to face.

The great yogi Patanjali, in *Yoga Sutras* II:3, enumerates five forms of "trouble" (*klesha*) that inhere in all incarnate beings: *avidya* (ignorance, individual delusion), *asmita* (ego, the body-identified state of the soul), *raga* (attachment, attraction to what one likes), *dvesha* (aversion, dislikes), *abhinivesha* (body attachment). Jesus had to overcome the ego's body-circumscribed human nature, the delusion at work in the dreadful events ahead of him, his attachment to his disciples and his love of serving those who sought his help, the natural human aversion to bodily suffering, and lastly, the primal psychological fear accompanying the prospect of death.

* Cf. parallel reference in Mark 14:33–34.

Patanjali further points out that even sages of divine realization feel some delusion and temporary attachment at the approach of death.* My guru, Swami Sri Yukteswar, often gave the following analogy: Just as a long-caged bird habituated to its confinement is reluctant to leave when offered freedom through an opened door, so also the soul-bird of paradise, on the threshold of transcendence in death, must overcome an instinctive unwillingness to forsake its accustomed captivity and dare the vastness of its native omnipresence. The soul afflicted with this delusion-engendered primal attachment is like the captive bird, preferring to remain in the bodily enclosure and to flutter with the restlessness of mortal activities within its narrow confines.

Aware of the susceptibility of all flesh to Satan's pervasive delusions, Jesus enjoined the disciples to "watch with me," signifying that they should tune in with his Christ Consciousness and keep vigil to thwart any encroachment of mortal ignorance in him and in themselves.

And he went a little farther, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt" (Matthew 26:39).

Parallel references:

And he went forward a little, and fell on the ground, and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. And he said, "Abba, Father, all things are possible unto Thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what Thou wilt" (Mark 14:35–36).

* * *

And he was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down, and prayed, saying "Father, if Thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but Thine, be done."

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* *Yoga Sutras* II:9: "The tenacity that clings to life as a result of body attachment, even in the wise, and that propagates itself (from the subtle memory of repeated experiences of death in previous incarnations) is *abhinivesha*."

And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him. And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground (Luke 22:41–44).

Jesus entreated God: "Abba, Almighty Father, You can do all things. As Your child, O beloved Father, I pray that if it be possible according to Your laws, and if You are willing, remove this cup of trial, so bitter for my consciousness to experience. But despite my wish to avoid this terrible ordeal, let not my will, but Your will be done."

Attuning human will to the wisdom-guidance of God's divine will

Jesus endearingly prays to the transcendental Father hidden behind the etheric walls of heaven, just as a favourite son in an earthly family would trustfully entreat his father: "Heavenly Father, as You can do everything, why not take this cup of crucifixion away from me?" But even as he prayed to be spared from the tyrannical workings of Cosmic Delusion, Jesus recognised the promptings of inner weakness and immediately added: "Nevertheless, let not my human will, fearful to meet the trial, be granted; let Your wisdom-guided divine will find fulfilment in my life."

Many persons misunderstand Jesus' saying: "Not my will, but Thine, be done." He never advised that God's children should renounce their soul-endowed independence of will and become unthinking mechanical tools, like a hammer that stays where it is put until picked up and wielded by the builder. Jesus' example, rather, showed that man is to use his God-given freedom to consciously choose to exercise his will in seeking to fulfil the Lord's wishes on earth. By cooperation with the Divine Will, man permits into his life the ready-and-waiting inflow of God's wisdom, power, love, joy. Jesus had taught his disciples to beseech the Father, "Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven."* To attune one's error-prone human will to God's will is to abide in the freedom and joy of an inner heaven on earth.

It was when Jesus found his will being sorely tempted and temporarily swayed by mortal pangs of delusion that he uttered the above prayer. He thus used his free will to shake off delusion and be guided only by the wisdom of the will of the Father.

* In the Lord's Prayer, Matthew 6:10; see commentary in Discourse 28.

*And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, "What, could ye not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Matthew 26:40–41).**

66 Simon, are you sleeping? How strange, you cannot muster your will power for even an hour of prayer, and of watchfulness with your eyes of intuition, to guard the temple of the mind against the entering of satanic delusion! Watch with your eyes of inner wisdom, and pray with love to your Heavenly Father, that you do not abuse your God-given freedom and yield willingly to the temptations and weaknesses of the body. I find in you that your spirit and innermost inclination is spontaneously willing to watch with wisdom and to pray to God with faith, but the physical limitations imposed by body consciousness and its habit of sleep are yet hampering that willingness."

The importance of introspective watchfulness to guard the mind against delusion

Jesus expressed dismay that Peter, owing to the impulse of physical frailty, could not keep awake for even one hour of watchful wisdom so that at this critical time he could reinforce his mind against the influence and vibration of Cosmic Satan. "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation." In these words, Jesus also signified that an evil impulse or Satan cannot force a person to yield to wrong promptings; "enter not" implies a free-will act of rejecting temptation.

All devotees, until final liberation is attained, are occasionally subject to diverse temptations that impede progress toward God. Delusion may easily steal unnoticed into the mind, influencing one's behaviour consciously or subconsciously; thus the devotee must always maintain a constant introspective watchfulness of his mental and emotional states and their subtle incitements to good or bad actions.

The worldly person, identified with the senses, responds more or less unthinkingly to the suggestions of bodily habits and temptations. The God-seeker, on the other hand, who keeps his awareness concentrated at the spiritual eye, is guided by the promptings of conscience and intuition. Thus his discrimination and self-control are ever awake and alert, able

* Cf. parallel references in Mark 14:37–38 and Luke 22:45–46.

to recognise and quash incitements of harmful impulses and habits intimated in his body-identified consciousness by cosmic delusion.

Jesus expressed sympathy for Peter (and all sincerely striving aspirants): "I am glad that you are willing to pray, even though your yet-to-be-mastered body is demanding to sleep." He commended the inner willingness of spirit that, out of love for God and goodness, makes an intense effort to pray and meditate even when the body disobeys. That state is far better than the hypocrisy of keeping the body outwardly posed in meditation and prayer while being inwardly rebellious and unwilling. The rebellion of the body and bad habits against the soul's desire to meditate is not as adverse as the rebellion of the inner mind against meditation.

Jesus commends the attitude of willingness to meditate and pray

Unwillingness of the body to meditate is much easier to remedy than is resistance of the inner spirit. Physical frailties indulged mechanically out of mortal habit, against the will of the inner spirit, only affect the devotee temporarily; those habits may be removed by consciously cultivating the will to mastery. But inner unwillingness to make such effort is the sign of one's spirit steeped in ignorance, which can be removed only by sincere, unceasing spiritual practice and self-control, never by mere outward pretense. Worst, of course, is when habits of weakness beat down both the spirit and the body. That state is much more detrimental than if only the flesh is resistant and the spirit is courageously willing to strive; eventually the spirit will infuse strength into the recalcitrant body, for if the spirit is truly willing, the flesh will be made strong.

He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, "O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, Thy will be done." And he came and found them asleep again: for their eyes were heavy.

*And he left them, and went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words. Then cometh he to his disciples, and saith unto them, "Sleep on now, and take your rest: behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going: behold, he is at hand that doth betray me" (Matthew 26:42–46).**

* Cf. parallel reference in Mark 14:39–42.

"O Father, if this cup of trial may not be taken away from me without my experiencing it, let Thy wisdom-guided will about me be fulfilled and let not my persecution-overwhelmed will prevail."

A second and a third time Jesus returned to the disciples and found them asleep; whereupon lastly he signified: "Your bodies need rest, so sleep on now. In spite of sleep, whenever you have willingly prayed, that is sufficient to please God and to destroy bad karma. Behold, the cosmic law–appointed time is near at hand when the Son of man, my physical body, is to be deceivingly delivered into the hands of Satan-governed and deluded souls. Rise and prepare to go; behold, Judas comes—he who will betray my body to the sinners."

And while he yet spake, lo, Judas, one of the twelve, came, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and elders of the people. Now he that betrayed him gave them a sign, saying, "Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he: hold him fast."

And forthwith he came to Jesus, and said, "Hail, master": and kissed him.

And Jesus said unto him, "Friend, wherefore art thou come?" (Matthew 26:47–50).

Parallel references:

And while he yet spake, behold a multitude, and he that was called Judas, one of the twelve, went before them, and drew near unto Jesus to kiss him. But Jesus said unto him, "Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?" (Luke 22:47–48).

* * *

Judas then, having received a band of men and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, cometh thither with lanterns and torches and weapons. Jesus therefore, knowing all things that should come upon him, went forth, and said unto them, "Whom seek ye?"

They answered him, "Jesus of Nazareth."

Jesus saith unto them, "I am he." And Judas also, which betrayed him, stood with them.

As soon then as he had said unto them, "I am he," they went backward, and fell to the ground.

Then asked he them again, "Whom seek ye?"

And they said, "Jesus of Nazareth."

*Jesus answered, "I have told you that I am he: if therefore ye seek me, let these go their way": That the saying might be fulfilled, which he spake, "Of them which Thou gavest me have I lost none" (John 18:3–9).**

66 With friendly spirit I greet you, Judas, and ask you to declare openly why have you come—is not your seemingly brotherly kiss a deception to deliver me over to those who consider themselves my enemies?"

Jesus addresses Judas as "friend" even though Jesus knew the treacherous intent of this disciple. Jesus could not help but see God in the soul of Judas and could thus greet him genuinely with a friendly spirit. The resentment an ordinary person would feel against someone who harms or maligns him found no entry into the consciousness of Jesus. His calmness, friendliness, love, and all divine qualities never left him, notwithstanding the most severe provocation. Even as a sheep looks with trustful eyes at the butcher who is about to kill it, so Jesus felt only a continuity of unblemished friendship and sympathy for this lost disciple.

The divine friendship of Jesus persisted even in the face of severest provocation

In the Bhagavad Gita, the Lord says: "He who is free from hatred toward all creatures, is friendly and kind to all, is devoid of the consciousness of 'I-ness' and possessiveness; is evenminded in suffering and joy, forgiving, ever contented; a regular yoga practitioner, constantly trying by yoga to know the Self and to unite with Spirit, possessed of firm determination, with mind and discrimination surrendered to Me—he is My devotee, dear to Me."†

Jesus behaved as a friend of all, in spite of the fact that others chose to feel inimical toward him. In the most heartrending kindliness,

* Cf. additional parallel reference in Mark 14:43–45.

† *God Talks With Arjuna: The Bhagavad Gita* XII:13–14.

and with divine compassion, Jesus says, "Beloved friend, Judas, is it right of you to betray me into the hands of my cruelest enemies with a false gesture of friendliness?"

Jesus also calls Judas "friend" to accord him equal regard as a child of God, to remind him that as such he had full power of free choice, as did Jesus, to do as he pleased for good or ill.

Jesus speaks of "the Son of man" being betrayed because, materially speaking, the body of Jesus could be betrayed; but the Christ Consciousness in him ("Son of God") could not be subjugated or harmed by anyone.

The inviolability of the divine consciousness of Spirit that inhabited the body of Jesus was demonstrated in the exchange between Jesus and the arresting guards as recorded by Saint John. When the weapon-bearing mob announced whom they sought, Jesus confronted them with the simple declaration: "I am he."* That is, "I am the Christ Consciousness manifested in the body of Jesus which you want for persecution." Though roused and ready to seize the master with violence, instantly the crowd "went backward, and fell to the ground," by the sheer power emanating from Jesus as he thus declared his divinity.

He then acknowledged that he was Jesus of Nazareth whom they sought: "If therefore you are seeking my body, let these my disciples go their way in freedom." This was the beginning of his sacrifice of great love for his disciples in which he bartered their freedom, physically and spiritually, by giving his body over to the Satan-ordained, karma-ordained trial of crucifixion.

Then came they, and laid hands on Jesus, and took him. And, behold, one of them which were with Jesus stretched out his hand, and drew his sword, and struck a servant of the high priest's, and smote off his ear.

Then said Jesus unto him, "Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the

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* "In Greek, simply *I am,* used frequently in the gospel in this everyday sense but often with divine resonance as well, since 'I AM' is a version of God's name in the Hebrew Bible (see Exodus 3:14–15)."—Robert J. Miller, ed., *The Complete Gospels: Annotated Scholars Version* (HarperSanFrancisco, 1994). *(Publisher's Note)*

sword. Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and He shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?" (Matthew 26:50–54).

Parallel references:

When they which were about him saw what would follow, they said unto him, "Lord, shall we smite with the sword?" And one of them smote the servant of the high priest, and cut off his right ear.

And Jesus answered and said, "Suffer ye thus far." And he touched his ear, and healed him (Luke 22:49–51).

* * *

Then Simon Peter having a sword drew it, and smote the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus.

Then said Jesus unto Peter, "Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" (John 18:10–11).

Jesus decries the use of the sword in his defence: "Although the terrible treatment that I am receiving in the hands of my enemies is causing much righteous indignation in you, Peter, you must learn to tolerate it, even if my enemies go thus far to maltreat me in spite of my innocence.

"Put your sword into the sheath, for all individuals and nations who use the sword against others, being under the influence of anger, revengefulness, territorial greed, national selfishness, or industrial covetousness, will find themselves inviting the use of swords against themselves. The bitter cup of the spiritual test that my Father has given me I must drink. But never dare to think that my loving Father would not hear my prayer and leave me helpless; for if I pray, He will instantaneously send more than twelve legions of angels to protect me. But then the scriptural prophecy about the fructification of the law of karma in my life, which I have offered as a ransom for many, would not be fulfilled."

"All they that take the sword shall perish with the sword"

Jesus admonished individuals and nations of the world that those who rely on the power of swords will themselves ultimately perish by the sword. In human nature, hatred rouses hatred: If anyone in anger, or in any wise under the influence of evil, lashes out with a sword against his enemy, he will find a sword drawn against himself. Evil is like a boomerang; a murderous person attracts a commensurate hurtful vibration against himself.

A "sword" may be any instrument of killing or aggression. Gangsters who keep themselves armed with guns, and who are ready to use them, inevitably face the same threat of death by gunshots. Those who try to kill others will themselves become targets of murderous assaults. Likewise, when one nation brandishes its armaments against a brother nation, the latter invariably is roused to array its weapons against the perceived aggressor. Jesus asked the nations to put up their swords of hatred in the sheath of self-control and abolish the gunpowder of revengefulness. Modern-style warfare—in which the unarmed populace far from the front lines is a target for long-range bombs and destruction just as much as the combat troops—is a grim testimony that aggressive wars of conquest bring to the invaders as grievous losses as to the invaded. All conquerors and aggressive nations, take heed, for those who use the sword shall perish by the sword!*

Whereas the sword most likely will defeat its purpose, love, when administered timely with wisdom, never fails to produce, sooner or later, the desired result. In the tumult of the moment, Jesus reminds his disciples that, if he chose to do so, he could escape the spiritual test of crucifixion by borrowing from God the very angels of heaven for his protection, or he had the power also simply to dematerialise his body. With the amplitude of his spiritual mastery, notwithstanding his incarnate status, he could completely contravene the law of karma, which was playing out its role of cause and effect; but he preferred not to demand special privileges. He had

Jesus proved his divinity by acting like a god, not like a man

*See also Discourse 27, commentary on Jesus' admonitions to "resist not evil," "turn the other cheek," and "love your enemies" for discussion of the practical application of the scriptural ideal of nonviolence (*ahimsa*).

In the Bhagavad Gita, Lord Krishna clearly distinguishes between the righteous and unrighteous use of force and warfare understood in light of the principle of *ahimsa*. See, for example, commentary on 11:32 in *God Talks With Arjuna: The Bhagavad Gita*.

long known what would result from his divine fortitude in preaching God's truth and resisting social evils. However, for the sake of the wicked people he wanted to reform, and the souls his sacrifice would save, he had determined to suffer the consequences—even as an ordinary man would suffer under similar circumstances—in order to demonstrate the power of love and God's nature of love and forgiveness. Though the magnitude of the power he could summon to flow through his bodily instrument was akin to God's omnipotence, Jesus did not want to use any force other than the power of love to conquer the wickedness of his human brothers.

Moments earlier Jesus had fervently prayed that the cup of suffering be removed; now, his self-mastery fully reestablished, he chides the well-meaning Peter: "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" He admonished the disciple to express soul qualities even when severely tested by unjust treatment. To give a slap for a slap is human behaviour; to give kindness for slaps is godliness. Jesus proved his Son of God identity by acting like a god and not like a man. Even in the moment of struggle when he was seized and the disciples were in a fury, he did not lose his soul calmness and self-possession or forget to be divine.* What is amazing is that Malchus, and those who witnessed Jesus' instantaneous healing of the servant's ear, as also his love for an afflicted enemy, were not thereby moved to soften their delusion-hardened cruel hearts, creating God-awakening within themselves. Yet such was the grip Satan had on their consciousness in that hour when the satanic "power of darkness" was given by the law of karma temporary ascendency even over the miracles of Christ-love.

In that same hour said Jesus to the multitudes, "Are ye come out as against a thief with swords and staves for to take me? I sat daily with you teaching in the temple, and ye laid no hold on me. But all this was done, that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled" (Matthew 26:55–56).

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* "He who unites his spirit to Me, having subjugated all his senses, remains concentrated on Me....The intuitive wisdom of that yogi becomes steadfast whose senses are under his sway" (*God Talks With Arjuna: The Bhagavad Gita* 11:61).

Parallel reference:

> *Then Jesus said unto the chief priests, and captains of the temple, and the elders, which were come to him, "Be ye come out, as against a thief, with swords and staves? When I was daily with you in the temple, ye stretched forth no hands against me: but this is your hour, and the power of darkness" (Luke 22:52–53).**

Jesus shames his persecutors by his fearless innocence: "Why did you feel the necessity of arming yourselves in order to seize my humble self, as though you were out to catch a ruthless thief? Why did you not arrest me when daily I sat with you in the temple? It is because this is the karmically ordained hour when my body is made vulnerable to capture by Satan's power."

The karmically determined time when Satan could successfully assail Jesus

Jesus points out that his destiny was perfectly timed; that up until that hour, the evil force was powerless against him, as evidenced on previous occasions when he had evaded harm and capture by divine protection.† Here Jesus signifies that when he was performing sanctified works of preaching and healing in the temple under the protecting power of Goodness, nobody had dared touch him; but that the karmically determined time had now arrived when he would submit himself to the spiritual test of the evil "power of darkness."

Satan, the Cosmic Delusive Intelligence, could punish Jesus only according to the law of karma. Having failed to turn Jesus against God by luring him with earthly temptations, Satan bided his time until, by Jesus' actions against the evils of the prevailing hierarchy, sufficient cause and effect had accrued that Satan was able to assail him through the instrumentality of the ignorance of the chief priests. That is why Jesus distinctly contrasts the two periods of his life's mission: the first, when he was freely preaching in the temple protected by the power of God; and second, when the satanic power, by using the law of karma set in motion by Jesus' actions, was causing his arrest and leading him to crucifixion. It is important to understand these little-understood deep meanings within the words of Jesus.

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* Cf. additional parallel reference in Mark 14:48–52.

† See, for example, Luke 4:28–30 (Discourse 39); also commentary on Luke 13:31–35 (Discourse 57).

*Then all the disciples forsook him, and fled. And they that had laid hold on Jesus led him away to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were assembled. But Peter followed him afar off unto the high priest's palace, and went in, and sat with the servants, to see the end (Matthew 26:56–58).**

Parallel reference:

Then the band and the captain and officers of the Jews took Jesus, and bound him, and led him away to Annas first; for he was father in law to Caiaphas, which was the high priest that same year. Now Caiaphas was he, which gave counsel to the Jews, that it was expedient that one man should die for the people.†

And Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another disciple: that disciple was known unto the high priest, and went in with Jesus into the palace of the high priest. But Peter stood at the door without. Then went out that other disciple, which was known unto the high priest, and spake unto her that kept the door, and brought in Peter....

The high priest then asked Jesus of his disciples, and of his doctrine. Jesus answered him, "I spake openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing. Why askest thou me? Ask them which heard me, what I have said unto them: behold, they know what I said."

And when he had thus spoken, one of the officers which stood by struck Jesus with the palm of his hand, saying, "Answerest thou the high priest so?"

Jesus answered him, "If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why smitest thou me?" (John 18:12–16, 19–23).

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* Cf. parallel references in Mark 14:53–54 and Luke 22:54–55.

† John 11:50 (see Discourse 60).

66 I have spoken openly to the world my soul-uplifting teachings, in the synagogue and in the temple where people are always present. I have said nothing in secret, since only evil needs hiding. Because of the divine nature of my words, they needed no secrecy. Why are you asking me? Ask them who heard me what I have said to them; hear their testimony and you will see that they know everything I said."

Jesus' godlike behaviour when interrogated by the high priest

Jesus had taught nothing but good, and he knew that the faithful ones who had heard him could speak of his teachings as solely beneficial. He preferred that the high priest receive their testimony rather than defend his teachings himself. Also, he was disappointed that his disciples had left him at his hour of trial; he wanted to find out if any were left who would stand up for him.

Of course, Jesus did not mean that he never gave private spiritual instruction to his disciples. To his closest advanced disciples he taught the esoteric science of meditation, giving to them "in secret" what the general populace in that dark era was not spiritually prepared to understand—"Therefore speak I to them in parables."* So when Jesus said, "In secret have I said nothing," he meant that nothing he had said or taught, in public or in private, was evil and needed to be concealed—nor had he ever covertly conspired against the country's laws.

When one of the officers struck him for his reply, Jesus meekly and yet firmly displayed his impeccable spiritual character. Jesus, who had power over all creation through his Christ Consciousness, who had raised the dead and healed the sick, and to whose prayers the Heavenly Father Himself replied through the clouds, was yet humbly nonresistant to the ignominious slap of an ignorant little man. The Christ Consciousness in Jesus, the Electronic Engineer controlling the lamps of all lives, could at the command of Jesus switch on or switch off life force from any person. Even as he had by a mere word caused the fig tree to wither, so could he have removed the life from his enemies in Jerusalem, or from all the people in the world if such a course were necessary and proper. Instead, Jesus, like God, behaved with humility, and meekly submitted his great self to the tyranny of a few wicked people. As God though all-powerful does not raise His hand in wrath to punish anybody who blasphemes Him, so He expects a faithful devotee to behave like Him. It was because of Jesus' preeminent desire that his life in all

* Matthew 13:13 (see Discourse 37).

ways should please God that he behaved in a godlike manner when he was abusively struck by an officious ordinary individual.

Jesus had a perfect sense of justice; he did not fail to apply it impartially even in judging himself. He calmly points out to the offensive human brute: "If I have spoken evil, hold that against me; but if I have spoken well, wherefore do I deserve to be smitten?" All "kings" of earthly empires, all egotists, remember! If Christ, with power over the entire cosmos, could yet be so humble, how much more should you strive for humility, you who are so far inferior in achievement! It is indeed evident from the life of Jesus that humbleness is one of the requisite signs of God-contact.

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*Now the chief priests, and elders, and all the council, sought false witness against Jesus, to put him to death; but found none: yea, though many false witnesses came, yet found they none. At the last came two false witnesses, and said, "This fellow said, 'I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days.'"**

And the high priest arose, and said unto him, "Answerest thou nothing? What is it which these witness against thee?"

But Jesus held his peace. And the high priest answered and said unto him, "I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God."

Jesus saith unto him, "Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven" (Matthew 26:59–64).

Parallel reference:

And as soon as it was day, the elders of the people and the chief priests and the scribes came together, and led him into their council, saying, "Art thou the Christ? Tell us."

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* Nowhere in the Gospel is it recorded that Jesus said that *he* would destroy the temple. The Gospel According to St. Mark, in recording this incident, includes additional details: "For many bare false witness against him, but their witness agreed not together. And there arose certain, and bare false witness against him, saying, 'We heard him say, I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands.' But neither so did their witness agree together" (Mark 14:56–59).

And he said unto them, "If I tell you, ye will not believe: and if I also ask you, ye will not answer me, nor let me go. Hereafter shall the Son of man sit on the right hand of the power of God."

Then said they all, "Art thou then the Son of God?"

And he said unto them, "Ye say that I am" (Luke 22:66–70).

Jesus in a remarkably selfless way confirms to his enemies his true Self by letting them declare it. (See also Mark 14:62 in which he replies simply, "I am.") In this oblique manner he affirms: "Thou hast truly said what I am—the prophesied Christ, the Son of God in whom is incarnate the Christ Consciousness, the reflection of the Father, Cosmic Consciousness." He could have in truth openly declared to them, "I am the Christ." Instead, in an ingenious avoidance of any appearance of egotism, which would have set an uncharacteristic bad example, Jesus was shyly diffident in expressing the full measure of the greatness and power of the God-realization within him. Nevertheless, he fearlessly acknowledged the truth in his humble way, even though he knew that the consequence would be death. According to the account in the Gospel According to St. Luke, Jesus added, in effect: "If I tell you that the Christ Consciousness is in me, you won't believe, for you do not know what I am. And if I ask you what I am, you will not be able to answer me, nor let me go free. So to what end is my saying anything to you?

Humbly yet fearlessly, Jesus acknowledges that he is indeed the Christ

"After the drama of this bodily existence is over, the Son of man, my body after resurrection, will be beheld in the astral world by advanced devotees as a manifestation of the Christ Consciousness that upholds the vibratory realms of all creation. All those who are able to perceive through their eye of wisdom will see my Christ-saturated body manifest in a vision 'sitting on the right hand of the power of God'—the projection of myself in an astral body ensconced in meditative ecstasy, with its cerebrospinal centres, the main channel of God's eternal power in the body, fully awakened and united in omnipotent oneness with the Universal Christ Consciousness reflected from God's Cosmic Consciousness. The vision will appear to the devotee as though coming out of the dark clouds of closed eyes, which theretofore had hidden the glory of the realms of heaven."

Meaning of "the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven"

In these verses, "hand" signifies working power and authority, and "right hand" signifies the principal working power, the reflected Intelligence of God working in creation. "Right hand of the power of God" therefore signifies the Christ Consciousness that emanates from God and is the principal working intelligence that activates and energizes all creation through the creative Cosmic Vibration.

Jesus' reply did not mean that in the future the people of the world, ignorant and wise, would see him "coming in the clouds of heaven." God, who is moving universes in space, has no need to impress earth-dwellers into submission by such a demonstration. If God so desired, He could cause collisions of all the island universes roaming in space and dissolve them into Himself amidst a colossal burst of flame. Or He could people all space with angels. But God, whose way is love and who suffered Jesus Christ to be crucified on the cross rather than send "twelve legions of angels" to protect him by creating fear in the hearts of the evildoers, would not countenance a spectacular reappearance of Christ coming out of the clouds, thus terrorizing people into subjugation.

In so answering the chief priest, Jesus was in fact giving a message to seekers of all times: Any true devotee who opens his spiritual eye can not only see a vision of Jesus, but also know the Christ Consciousness in himself as the "right-hand" power of God. Just as an owner of a factory has his "right-hand man," so the Owner of the universe, the transcendental Cosmic Consciousness, has Its "right-hand man" in the Christ Consciousness omnipresent in creation. This Christ Intelligence is the immanent channel of God the Father of creation, the sole medium through which the power of Cosmic Consciousness materialised into creation—God, reflected as Christ Consciousness, as the Essence of all that is.

As the transcendent region of Cosmic Consciousness is hidden behind the "clouds" or darkness beheld with closed eyes, and as the clouds in earth's atmosphere seen with open eyes hide the regions beyond, so also the darkness of closed eyes and the dark depths of the sky as seen with open eyes both act as walls that hide the luminous region of the astral heaven, concealed behind the transparent yet opaque vibratory rampart of the ether. True visions may be seen with open or closed eyes. Every highly developed spiritual devotee who can look through his telescopic spiritual eye finds that the clouds of darkness of closed eyes and the etheric firmament obstructing the perception of

open eyes thereby vanish into the nothingness of their illusory essence. When the devotee through the aid of the spiritual eye thus banishes the inner darkness of closed eyes and the outer opacity of the skyey firmament, the heavenly astral cosmos appears, revealing the angels of God and many luminous wonders.*

Jesus signified that after his earthly incarnation, he would exist not only as Spirit but as a materialised form, perceptible in vision to any devotee in attunement, coming out of the darkness of closed eyes from the heavenly astral region whose elements of light and life force provide the substantive appearance of all visions. Jesus gave his answer to the chief priest to attest that as a son of God he had all power and could abide as Spirit or could materialise his body as the Son of Man or as a Christ body, any time—even after death from crucifixion.

Then the high priest rent his clothes, saying, "He hath spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses? Behold, now ye have heard his blasphemy. What think ye?"

They answered and said, "He is guilty of death."

Then did they spit in his face, and buffeted him; and others smote him with the palms of their hands, saying, "Prophesy unto us, thou Christ, who is he that smote thee?"

Now Peter sat without in the palace: and a damsel came unto him, saying, "Thou also wast with Jesus of Galilee." But he denied before them all, saying, "I know not what thou sayest."

And when he was gone out into the porch, another maid saw him, and said unto them that were there, "This fellow was also with Jesus of Nazareth." And again he denied with an oath, "I do not know the man."

And after a while came unto him they that stood by, and said to Peter, "Surely thou also art one of them; for thy speech bewrayeth thee."

Then began he to curse and to swear, saying, "I know not the man." And immediately the cock crew. And Peter remembered the word of Jesus, which said unto him, "Before the cock crow,

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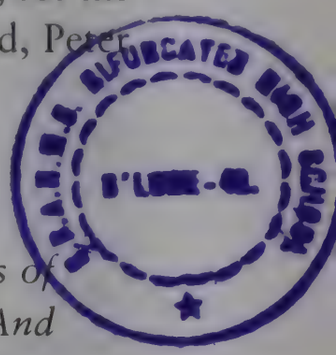
* See also Discourse 10, commentary on John 1:51, "Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God...."

*thou shalt deny me thrice." And he went out, and wept bitterly (Matthew 26:65–75).**

Even though in his hour of trial Jesus was abandoned by Peter and other of the disciples, most of them later repented of their weakness and atoned for their sin; strengthened in their recollected realization of the grace and blessings Jesus had bestowed on them, they regained their faith and courage. Tradition holds that Peter, who was eventually killed for preaching Christ's truth, asked his persecutors to crucify him with his head down and his feet up, for his sin in having thrice denied Christ when, as Jesus had predicted, Peter fell temporarily under the influence of satanic delusion.



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When the morning was come, all the chief priests and elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death: And when they had bound him, they led him away, and delivered him to Pontius Pilate the governor.

Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, "I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood."

And they said, "What is that to us? See thou to that." And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself.

And the chief priests took the silver pieces, and said, "It is not lawful for to put them into the treasury, because it is the price of blood." And they took counsel, and bought with them the potter's field, to bury strangers in. Wherefore that field was called, The field of blood, unto this day. Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying, "And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was valued, whom they of the children of Israel did value; and gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord appointed me" (Matthew 27:1–10).†

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* Cf. parallel references in Mark 14:63–72, Luke 22:56–71, and John 18:16–27.

† Cf. Zechariah 11:12–13: "So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver. And the Lord said unto me, 'Cast it unto the potter: a goodly price that I was prised at of them.' And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them to the potter in the house of the Lord."

Thus did Judas meet the culmination of his infamous role, overwhelmed by the guilt of his betrayal of his Master and cast out of the company of Jesus' personally chosen apostles by his own treacherous behaviour. As is recorded in the Biblical book of "The Acts of the Apostles":

"And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples, and said (the number of names together were about an hundred and twenty), 'Men and brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus. For he was numbered with us, and had obtained part of this ministry. Now this man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out. And it was known unto all the dwellers at Jerusalem; insomuch as that field is called in their proper tongue, *Aceldama,* that is to say, The field of blood. For it is written in the book of Psalms, "Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein: and his bishopric let another take"'" (Acts 1:15–20).*

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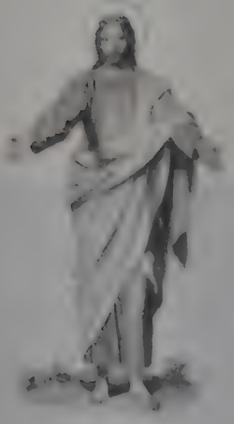
* "Let their habitation be desolate; and let none dwell in their tents" (Psalms 69:25). "Let his days be few; and let another take his office" (Psalms 109:8).



DISCOURSE 74

The Crucifixion

Who Was Responsible for the Crucifixion and Death of Jesus?

❖

Jesus' Compassionate Concern for Others
Expressed Even on His Way to Be Crucified

❖

Greatest of All Miracles Performed by Jesus:
The Love He Expressed on the Cross

❖

The Wonder of Divine Intercession:
A Promise of Paradise for the Repentant Thief

❖

Jesus' Human Struggle on the Cross:
"My God, Why Hast Thou Forsaken Me?"

❖

When Jesus Cried Out to God,
the Satanic Dream Delusion of Bodily Suffering Was Defeated

❖

Jesus Consciously Launches His Liberated Soul Into Absolute Spirit

"The God in Jesus showed Himself as meek, humble, unconditionally loving, and ever willing to help His children....'Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.' These words have created in human hearts an everlasting monument to Christ-love."

Then led they Jesus from Caiaphas unto the hall of judgment: and it was early; and they themselves went not into the judgment hall, lest they should be defiled; but that they might eat the Passover. Pilate then went out unto them, and said, "What accusation bring ye against this man?"

They answered and said unto him, "If he were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered him up unto thee."

Then said Pilate unto them, "Take ye him, and judge him according to your law."

The Jews therefore said unto him, "It is not lawful for us to put any man to death": That the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled, which he spake, signifying what death he should die.

Then Pilate entered into the judgment hall again, and called Jesus, and said unto him, "Art thou the King of the Jews?"

Jesus answered him, "Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of me?"

Pilate answered, "Am I a Jew? Thine own nation and the chief priests have delivered thee unto me: What hast thou done?"

Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence."

Pilate therefore said unto him, "Art thou a king then?"

Jesus answered, "Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice."

Pilate saith unto him, "What is truth?"

And when he had said this, he went out again unto the Jews, and saith unto them, "I find in him no fault at all. But ye have a custom, that I should release unto you one at the Passover: will ye therefore that I release unto you the King of the Jews?"

Then cried they all again, saying, "Not this man, but Barabbas." Now Barabbas was a robber.

Then Pilate therefore took Jesus, and scourged him. And the soldiers platted a crown of thorns, and put it on his head, and they put on him a purple robe, and said, "Hail, King of the Jews!" and they smote him with their hands.

Pilate therefore went forth again, and saith unto them, "Behold, I bring him forth to you, that ye may know that I find no fault in him."

Then came Jesus forth, wearing the crown of thorns, and the purple robe. And Pilate saith unto them, "Behold the man!"

When the chief priests therefore and officers saw him, they cried out, saying, "Crucify him, crucify him."

Pilate saith unto them, "Take ye him, and crucify him: for I find no fault in him."

The Jews answered him, "We have a law, and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God."

When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he was the more afraid; and went again into the judgment hall, and saith unto Jesus, "Whence art thou?" But Jesus gave him no answer.

Then saith Pilate unto him, "Speakest thou not unto me? Knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee?"

Jesus answered, "Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above: therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin."

And from thenceforth Pilate sought to release him: but the Jews cried out, saying, "If thou let this man go, thou art not Caesar's friend: whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Caesar."

When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he brought Jesus forth, and sat down in the judgment seat in a place that is called the Pavement, but in the Hebrew, Gabbatha. And it was the preparation of the Passover, and about the sixth hour: and he saith unto the Jews, "Behold your King!"

But they cried out, "Away with him, away with him, crucify him."

Pilate saith unto them, "Shall I crucify your King?"

The chief priests answered, "We have no king but Caesar."

Then delivered he him therefore unto them to be crucified. And they took Jesus, and led him away. And he bearing his cross went forth into a place called the place of a skull, which is called in the Hebrew Golgotha: where they crucified him, and two other with him, on either side one, and Jesus in the midst.

And Pilate wrote a title, and put it on the cross. And the writing was JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS. *This title then read many of the Jews: for the place where Jesus was crucified was nigh to the city: and it was written in Hebrew, and Greek, and Latin.*

Then said the chief priests of the Jews to Pilate, "Write not, 'The King of the Jews'; but that he said, 'I am King of the Jews.'"

Pilate answered, "What I have written I have written."

Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took his garments, and made four parts, to every soldier a part; and also his coat: now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout.

They said therefore among themselves, "Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be": that the scripture might be fulfilled, which saith, "They parted my raiment among them, and for my vesture they did cast lots." These things therefore the soldiers did.

Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, "Woman, behold thy son!" Then saith he to the disciple, "Behold thy mother!" And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home.

After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, "I thirst." Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar: and they filled a

spunge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and put it to his mouth.

When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, "It is finished": and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.

The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the Sabbath day, (for that Sabbath day was an high day,) besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away.

Then came the soldiers, and brake the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with him.

But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs: But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water. And he that saw it bare record, and his record is true: and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe. For these things were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled, "A bone of him shall not be broken." And again another scripture saith, "They shall look on him whom they pierced."

And after this Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, besought Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus: and Pilate gave him leave. He came therefore, and took the body of Jesus. And there came also Nicodemus, which at the first came to Jesus by night, and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound weight. Then took they the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury.

Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein was never man yet laid. There laid they Jesus therefore because of the Jews' preparation day; for the sepulchre was nigh at hand.

—John 18:28–19:42

DISCOURSE 74

The Crucifixion

Then led they Jesus from Caiaphas unto the hall of judgment: and it was early; and they themselves went not into the judgment hall, lest they should be defiled; but that they might eat the Passover. Pilate then went out unto them, and said, "What accusation bring ye against this man?"*

They answered and said unto him, "If he were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered him up unto thee."

Then said Pilate unto them, "Take ye him, and judge him according to your law."

The Jews therefore said unto him, "It is not lawful for us to put any man to death": That the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled, which he spake, signifying what death he should die.†

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* They were observing the rules of ritual purity, which dictated that entering the house of a Gentile rendered one unclean for the Passover rites. Cf. parallel references in Matthew 27:1–2, Mark 15:1, and Luke 23:1.

Since Matthew 26:18–20, Mark 14:12–17, and Luke 22:7–15 all clearly state that Jesus ate the Passover supper with his disciples on the previous evening, this reference in St. John's Gospel (as also John 19:14, cited later in this Discourse) has led to much scholarly disputation. However, many authorities find no contradiction, since Passover observances lasted for seven days, not just the day of the ritual supper. A detailed discussion may be found in *Smith's Bible Dictionary* under the heading "Passover." *(Publisher's Note)*

† This phrase is repeated in John 12:32–33, in which it is clear that Jesus is referring to his crucifixion (see Discourse 66): "'And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.' This he said, signifying what death he should die." Thus in the present verses the implication is that the Jewish officials, by giving Jesus to the Romans to be put to death (since the priests themselves were powerless to render that verdict for

Then Pilate entered into the judgment hall again, and called Jesus, and said unto him, "Art thou the King of the Jews?"

Jesus answered him, "Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of me?" (John 18:28–34).

Jesus wished to escape answering, over and over, the demeaning queries about his God-given divine credentials. Thus in his reply to Pontius Pilate, he sidesteps the question by shaming the Roman governor for having asked at the prompting of those who were his subjects.

Pilate answered, "Am I a Jew? Thine own nation and the chief priests have delivered thee unto me: what hast thou done?"

Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence" (John 18:35–36).

"My kingdom is not of this world"

66 The sovereign kingdom of my universal Christ Consciousness is Omnipresence and thus cannot be circumscribed by this earthly sphere—much less some small portion of it as might be ruled by a mortal monarch. If my claim were to royal status in this temporal world, then my followers would fight as soldiers to save me from being turned over to those who want to kill me. But my kingdom is 'not from hence'—not here in a particular time and place in this material creation. Kings of a little tract in finite space-time find their dominion demarcated by delusory boundaries of past, present, and future; and marred by the ravaging hand of change. But 'now is my kingdom': My Christ Intelligence is enthroned everlastingly in the unchangeability of the Eternal Now, as Lord of the overarching causal and astral realms as well as the subordinate fiefdom of matter."

In a few potent words Jesus illumines the difference between the earthly and the divine kingdom. Because he was one with the Supreme Intelligence governing the whole cosmos, he had no inclination to fight

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the crimes of which they accused him), contributed to fulfilment of Jesus' prophecy of death by crucifixion, which was solely a Roman practice.

for an earthly kingship and its impermanent power. His consciousness omnipresent in myriad universes with their countless suns and moons and planets, he could not even dream of aspiring to a delimited regality. Divinely humble rather than humanly domineering in his possession of supreme power, his life on earth manifested the quintessential humility of the Cosmic Sovereign.

By meekly allowing himself to be crucified, which set the stage for his resurrection, Jesus would prove his immortality and that of all souls. What conceivable fascination with an impermanent mortal kingdom could prevail when one is consciously heir to the empire of Eternity? Therefore Jesus' reply to Pilate meant that, being the ruler of an imperishable super-realm, he had trained his disciples not to fight for temporal power or for the purpose of saving a perishable earthly life. By precept and example he inspired in them the supreme wisdom of sacrificing mortal life for the sake of gaining eternal life and bliss.

The lesson inherent in his words: "Since my kingdom is omnipresence, I teach my disciples to fight the delusion of earthly attachment to the body and possessions, and thus to secure their own reign in the infinite kingdom. Those who fight for an earthly domain may or may not receive earthly power. In those who desire worldly dominance there is no interest in the spiritual quest to acquire immortal invincibility; in those who are interested in acquiring omnipotence in Spirit, there is no inclination to fight for material power and possessions only to lose them quickly at death. Therefore, it is better, if necessary, to forfeit the body and its inconstant treasures to gain realization of the immortality of the soul and its perpetual happiness. It is foolish to waste the precious moments of life in conquests for the impermanent body and its pleasures in utter negligence of the acquisition of everlasting life."

This world is a place of ambiguity and imperfection; man was not meant to find lasting peace and happiness here. Rather, souls are sent on earth to slough off their delusive mortal guise and regain expression of their divine nature by learning to behave according to the teachings of such exemplars as Jesus Christ, Bhagavan Krishna, the Lord Buddha. The histrionics of life are a motion picture shown in the movie house of God; His individualized selves are the actors who have become lost in identification with their portrayals. Jesus accepted his painful role of death on the cross to show that the earth was not his kingdom—and that for all souls the material world is not their kingdom—by proving his immutability despite the body's crucifixion. He demonstrated for all human

beings their own immortality—that they too cannot be destroyed by the light-and-shadow elements of fire or sword or any other means.*

Pilate therefore said unto him, "Art thou a king then?"

Jesus answered, "Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice."

Pilate saith unto him, "What is truth?" (John 18:37–38).

Parallel reference:

And Jesus stood before the governor: and the governor asked him, saying, "Art thou the King of the Jews?"

And Jesus said unto him, "Thou sayest" (Matthew 27:11).†

Once again Jesus confirms his status in his reticent way: "Though it is true that I am a king, you are saying it—not I.

The Christ Intelligence as the ruling principle of cosmic creation

"It was for this purpose that my Christ Intelligence, the Universal Intelligence with which I am one, was born out of Cosmic Consciousness: to be the cause and ruling principle of the cosmos. Christ Intelligence was reflected in creation to bear witness of the only truth, Cosmic Consciousness present beyond creation. Every devotee who is in tune with Truth, Cosmic Consciousness, has reached that attainment through hearing the Cosmic Vibration of *Aum,* Holy Ghost, which emanates from and is the voice of my Christ Intelligence."

The kingly Christ Intelligence, appointed by the transcendental God to govern all creation, is the witness, the reflection, of the Truth

* "This Self is never born nor does it ever perish; nor having come into existence will it again cease to be. It is birthless, eternal, changeless, ever-same (unaffected by the usual processes associated with time). It is not slain when the body is killed....

"No weapon can pierce the soul; no fire can burn it; no water can moisten it; nor can any wind wither it. The soul is uncleavable; it cannot be burnt or wetted or dried. The soul is immutable, all-permeating, ever calm, and immovable—eternally the same" (*God Talks With Arjuna: The Bhagavad Gita* 11:20, 23–24).

† Cf. additional parallel references in Mark 15:2 and Luke 23:3.

—the Cosmic Consciousness of the transcendental Father which is the only Substance out of which came all that exists. Jesus points out that every advanced devotee who contacts Truth, the Cosmic Consciousness, has first to contact the Holy Ghost or Cosmic Vibration and the Christ Consciousness present in it.

[In his Autobiography of a Yogi,* *Paramahansaji addresses the subject of the traditionally acknowledged silence maintained by Jesus in response to Pilate's question:]*

> All great prophets have remained silent when requested to unveil the ultimate secrets. When Pilate asked: "What is truth?" Christ made no reply. The large ostentatious questions of intellectualists like Pilate seldom proceed from a burning spirit of enquiry. Such men speak rather with the empty arrogance that considers a lack of conviction about spiritual values to be a sign of "open-mindedness."
>
> "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Everyone that is of the truth heareth my voice." In these few words Christ spoke volumes. A child of God "bears witness" *by his life.* He embodies truth; if he expound it also, that is generous redundancy.
>
> Truth is no theory, no speculative system of philosophy, no intellectual insight. Truth is exact correspondence with reality. For man, truth is unshakable knowledge of his real nature, his Self as soul. Jesus, by every act and word of his life, proved that he knew *the truth* of his being—his source in God. Wholly identified with the omnipresent Christ Consciousness, he could say with simple finality: "Everyone that is of the truth heareth my voice."
>
> Buddha, too, refused to shed light on the metaphysical ultimates, dryly pointing out that man's few moments on earth are best employed in perfecting the moral nature. The Chinese mystic Lao-tzu rightly taught: "He who knows, tells it not; he who tells, knows it not." The final mysteries of God are not "open to discussion." The decipherment of His secret code is an art that man cannot communicate to man; here the Lord alone is the Teacher.
>
> "Be still, and know that I am God."† Never flaunting His omnipresence, the Lord is heard only in the immaculate silences. Reverberating throughout the universe as the creative *Aum*

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* In the final chapter, which he wrote in 1951 (included in the third and subsequent editions).

† Psalms 46:10.

The Crucifixion

And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him....

Then said Jesus, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."

—Luke 23:33–34

Of all the miracles performed by Jesus, none was equal to that mightiest miracle of the spiritual victory of divine love over evil: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." These words have created in human hearts an everlasting monument to Christ-love....

His act of forgiveness on the cross was the utterance of a divinely human Jesus who had attained final victory over flesh and cosmic delusion and passed the greatest test to which the flesh can be subject. Even while the dearest thing in life, the human body, was suffering the pangs of torment and imminent death, Jesus did not falter in manifesting his divine nature....He gave up his body but never yielded his spirit.

—Paramahansa Yogananda

Drawing by Heinrich Hofmann

vibration, the Primal Sound instantly translates Itself into intelligible words for the devotee in attunement.

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And when he [Pilate] had said this, he went out again unto the Jews, and saith unto them, "I find in him no fault at all. But ye have a custom, that I should release unto you one at the Passover: will ye therefore that I release unto you the King of the Jews?"

Then cried they all again, saying, "Not this man, but Barabbas." Now Barabbas was a robber.

Then Pilate therefore took Jesus, and scourged him. And the soldiers platted a crown of thorns, and put it on his head, and they put on him a purple robe, and said, "Hail, King of the Jews!" and they smote him with their hands.

*Pilate therefore went forth again, and saith unto them, "Behold, I bring him forth to you, that ye may know that I find no fault in him."**

Then came Jesus forth, wearing the crown of thorns, and the purple robe. And Pilate saith unto them, "Behold the man!"

When the chief priests therefore and officers saw him, they cried out, saying, "Crucify him, crucify him."

Pilate saith unto them, "Take ye him, and crucify him: for I find no fault in him."

The Jews answered him, "We have a law, and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God."

When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he was the more afraid; and went again into the judgment hall, and saith unto Jesus, "Whence art thou?" But Jesus gave him no answer.

Then saith Pilate unto him, "Speakest thou not unto me? Knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee?"

Jesus answered, "Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above: therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin" (John 18:38 — 19:11).†

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* As recorded in St. Luke's Gospel, Pilate sent Jesus to be examined by Herod also, who "questioned him in many words; but he answered him nothing." Pilate then proclaimed to the mob that Jesus was guiltless: "Behold, I have found no fault in this man...nor yet Herod." See Luke 23:4–19.

† Cf. parallel references in Matthew 27:12–21, 27–31; and Mark 15:3–11, 16–20.

"O Pilate, you could have no power over me whatsoever if this situation had not been so devised by the Evil Force of cosmic delusion. It is Satan, with his overarching influence—'from above'—who has caused me to be delivered unto you through Judas, and has possessed your authority to make you act according to his will in condemning me wrongly to crucifixion. Therefore Satan, and Judas as his instrument, have the greater responsibility for this heinous crime against the God in me."

Who was responsible for the crucifixion and death of Jesus?

Jesus knew that even though Pilate was the ruler in the land of Judea, he would be powerless to free him because the dominating Satanic Force was invisibly masterminding circumstances leading determinately to the cross. So completely was Pilate's judgment thereby clouded that even an extraordinary intervention could not sway him: "When he was set down on the judgment seat, his wife sent unto him, saying, 'Have thou nothing to do with that just man: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him.' But the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitude that they should ask Barabbas, and destroy Jesus."*

Pilate surrendered to the tide of events, denying his culpability,† though every soul under the duress of evil is yet free to shun the promptings of Satan and to receive the power and guidance of God. Regardless, Jesus in his wisdom acknowledged that according to divine law Pilate was secondarily responsible for the crucifixion, having failed to exercise inner strength to resist evil; but that Satan and his instrument Judas bore the primary guilt.

* Matthew 27:19–20. Bible historians J. W. McGarvey and Philip Pendleton, in *The Fourfold Gospel* (Cincinnati: Standard Publishing, 1914), note: "The Romans generally were influenced by all presages, and Suetonius tells us that both Julius and Augustus Caesar attached much importance to dreams." Pilate's wife, whom tradition names Claudia Procula, was apparently the only individual to intercede on Jesus' behalf; she is a canonized saint in the Greek Orthodox Church.

† "When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, 'I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it'" (Matthew 27:24).

Nevertheless, the historian Eusebius records that Pilate, "wearied with misfortunes," later committed suicide.

And from thenceforth Pilate sought to release him: but the Jews cried out, saying, "If thou let this man go, thou art not Caesar's friend: whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Caesar."

When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he brought Jesus forth, and sat down in the judgment seat in a place that is called the Pavement, but in the Hebrew, Gabbatha. And it was the preparation of the Passover, and about the sixth hour: and he saith unto the Jews, "Behold your King!"

But they cried out, "Away with him, away with him, crucify him."

Pilate saith unto them, "Shall I crucify your King?"

The chief priests answered, "We have no king but Caesar."

Then delivered he him therefore unto them to be crucified. And they took Jesus, and led him away (John 19:12–16).

Parallel reference:

Pilate therefore, willing to release Jesus, spake again to them. But they cried, saying, "Crucify him, crucify him."

And he said unto them the third time, "Why, what evil hath he done? I have found no cause of death in him: I will therefore chastise him, and let him go."

And they were instant with loud voices, requiring that he might be crucified. And the voices of them and of the chief priests prevailed. And Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they required. And he released unto them him that for sedition and murder was cast into prison, whom they had desired; but he delivered Jesus to their will.

And as they led him away, they laid hold upon one Simon, a Cyrenian, coming out of the country, and on him they laid the cross, that he might bear it after Jesus. And there followed him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented him.

But Jesus turning unto them said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children. For, behold, the days are coming, in the which they shall say, 'Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck.' Then shall they begin to say to the

mountains, 'Fall on us'; and to the hills, 'Cover us.' For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?" (Luke 23:20–31).†*

"Daughters of Jerusalem, do not grieve for me, for I shall abide eternally in the safe arms of God. Rather, weep for yourselves and your children, and repent; for though you stand in apparent safety lamenting my crucifixion, yet I see that a dire fate awaits you in future. The time is coming for Jerusalem when, through the law of individual and mass karma, the accumulation of ignorance and past evil actions will yield a harvest of suffering—so much that unless there is a spiritual awakening of your souls, the resultant misery will make you rue that you and your children had ever been born.

Jesus' compassionate concern for others expressed even on his way to be crucified

"The suffering of sinful persons will be so intense—their consciousness burning with self-inflicted torment—that they will wish the mountains to fall on them and the hills to cover and bury them. They will crave death rather than to live and endure such misery. If the forces of the cause-and-effect sequences of the karmic law bring suffering even to those lives that are vitally green with virtues, then how great will be the effect on those whose extreme sinfulness has left their spiritual life withered and dry!"

The divine wisdom and inner attitude of Jesus remained unflinching even on his way to crucifixion. He accepted his suffering knowing that it was not because of any wrongdoing, but that he was martyring himself for the sake of truth. In exchange for the temporarily painful sacrifice of his body he would receive unqualified eternal bliss for fulfilling his God-given mission.

Thus Jesus refused to cower in feeling sorry for himself, and instead warned those who were weeping for him that they should pity themselves. His words showed no lack of appreciation for the sympathy of the women who wailed for him; on the contrary, he was moved by their sympathy to advise them to take steps of spiritual reformation and reparation to alter the course of the impending evils of their own future.

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* Jesus is quoting from the book of prophet Hosea (10:8).

† Cf. additional parallel references in Mark 15:12–15, 21.

And he bearing his cross went forth into a place called the place of a skull, which is called in the Hebrew Golgotha: where they crucified him, and two other with him, on either side one, and Jesus in the midst (John 19:17–18).

Parallel reference:

And there were also two other, malefactors, led with him to be put to death. And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left.

Then said Jesus, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:32–34).

Jesus intercedes with the Father to be merciful to his murderers

"Heavenly Father, let not the exacting cosmic law of cause and effect punish these Thy children who in ignorance are crucifying this body; they do not know the dire result attendant on their dreadful actions."

In here addressing God as "Father," Jesus appeals to the personal heart of Divinity: "Heavenly Father, You have created human fathers and endowed them with instincts of kindness for their children, instincts born of Your infinitely greater Love; bestow that Benevolence on Your erring children, my brothers who are so wrongfully persecuting me."

"Forgive them" means: "Heavenly Father, being Almighty, You alone can stay Your cosmic law and forgive my persecutors from suffering the results of their terrible sins committed against me."

"For they know not what they do" means that all sins, consciously or unconsciously performed, are committed under the influence of innate human ignorance. Any soul who has attained divine wisdom will do no evil.

In this act of expressing divine forgiveness under the most intense provocation of malefic treatment, Jesus lifted himself up so far above the average human nature that he felt in himself fatherly feelings toward all humanity; and thus when some of the grown-up-in-age-but-infantile-in-wisdom human children were crucifying him, he could only feel pity for them in their ignorance. In picturing the magnitude

of their fateful, self-created suffering, he ignored his own. Instead of praying for surcease of his own torment, with infinite compassion he interceded with the Heavenly Father on behalf of his murderers.

It is a fair certainty that most people would not commit a sin if they could exactly picture the results of their evil deed. But wrongful behaviour is often expedient and usually pleasant because ignorance prevents obvious connection between causes and consequences; direful events evoke the proverbial cry of "Why?" A man of wisdom thus never wants to stray from attunement with God's love and God's laws.

Jesus was a visible and audible example of the love and forgiveness of God. Silently and invisibly our Creator shows infinite forbearance, despite the transgressions of His children —every day of every year in a lifetime, and for all of each one's many lifetimes—sins committed by the misuse of God-given free will. Jesus elsewhere told his followers to forgive their enemies "seventy times seven."* I used to feel confidently virtuous for forgiving my enemies even up to ten times, so I was amazed when I first read those words of Jesus. I couldn't understand how we could get along in this world if we were to express such a forgiving nature to enemies who deliberately and repeatedly try to injure us. In answer to my prayers, I heard the Divine Voice speak to me: "Behold, how many times I forgive man every day of every year throughout countless incarnations!" I could but humbly acknowledge that it is not too much to ask all to forgive their enemies seventy times seven. (To forgive does not mean to cooperate with or condone evil, but rather to harbour no feelings of hatred or vengefulness nor engage in acts so motivated.)

The example of Jesus shows that God is all-forgiving and that man need never fear Him

Nearly all persons unknowingly sin against God every day. It is easy to break, or at least bend, His laws and commandments to satisfy impulses and desires. It is not that we should be forgiven because He made us weak human beings and left it to us to somehow become perfect. Rather, He has placed within us, within this imperfect bodily instrument, the perfection that belongs to Him. That is why He is so exacting, and why He forgives us with repeated opportunities to reclaim our true soul nature. At last He takes us back in spite of all the transgressions of misspent lifetimes. Thus it is said, "Saints are sinners who

* Matthew 18:22 (see Discourse 35).

never gave up." They keep on trying and trying until they conquer. God's standard of perfection—His own image in which He has made us—is absolute, but nevertheless attainable because man's flawed human consciousness is only a graft on his divine consciousness. Those who concentrate steadily on manifesting their native divinity will one day be so overwhelmed by the perfection of their soul nature that they will wonder how they ever behaved so sinfully as human beings!

Multitudes of God's children would little know how loving and forgiving the Heavenly Father is, but for the example of Jesus' spirit of forgiveness on the cross. That Jesus, who fully represented almighty God, did not retaliate with his miraculous powers even though he was sorely tried by his persecutors, was an assurance to all mankind that God is ready to forgive His children in spite of their sins and errors. They need never fear their Heavenly Father nor think themselves unworthy to repent and seek His kingdom. The God in Jesus showed Himself as meek, humble, unconditionally loving, and ever willing to help His children no matter how egregious their offence against Him, His laws, and their own well-being.

Of all the miracles performed by Jesus, none was equal to that mightiest miracle of the spiritual victory of divine love over evil: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." These words have created in human hearts an everlasting monument to Christ-love.

Greatest of all miracles performed by Jesus: the love he expressed on the cross

Jesus could not be tempted to use divine power or any other means except love to conquer the hatred of his wicked brothers. With his spiritual eye opened to Christ and Cosmic Consciousness, Jesus was able consciously to wield power over all creation, and could have easily disintegrated his enemies. Satan's intent in the crucifixion of Jesus was that it serve as a final temptation, that he might use his miraculous power to save his temporal body. The ever presumptuous Satan expected that the spirit of Jesus would break down under the test on the cross, succumbing to inner weakness of fear or revengefulness that would make him forsake his God-consciousness and thus come under the dominion of delusion. But Jesus defeated Satan with the superior powers of his God-united spirit. He conquered with godliness and thus forever banished satanic delusion from the precincts of his soul.

Though Satan succeeded in getting Jesus crucified, still the Evil Force had no victory. Jesus used the Satan-created ladder of

crucifixion to ascend from all satanic delusion into transcendental freedom in God. His act of forgiveness on the cross was the utterance of a divinely human Jesus who had attained final victory over flesh and cosmic delusion and passed the greatest test to which the flesh can be subject. Even while the dearest thing in life, the human body, was suffering the pangs of torment and imminent death, Jesus did not falter in manifesting his divine nature. No matter the tortures of the flesh and the severity of the indignity, mockery, and hatred, still he did not succumb to the promptings of human nature. Out of the limitations of flesh he manifested the power of his unlimited spirit and the image of God within him.

There are martyrs who have willingly, even smilingly, undergone the tortures of death; but there have been few spiritually advanced enough to possess and yet not to use their miracle power to bring evildoers to their senses. Jesus never gave signs of his powers or miracles to dissuade his enemies from crucifying him. He gave up his body but never yielded his spirit.

The forgiving spirit of the Heavenly Father so perfectly demonstrated by Jesus manifests in all who have attained the Christ Consciousness that he had. Here and there on rare occasions we find expressions of that spirit in great devotees of God.

And Pilate wrote a title, and put it on the cross. And the writing was JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS. *This title then read many of the Jews: for the place where Jesus was crucified was nigh to the city: and it was written in Hebrew, and Greek, and Latin.*

Then said the chief priests of the Jews to Pilate, "Write not, 'The King of the Jews'; but that he said, 'I am King of the Jews.'"

Pilate answered, "What I have written I have written."

Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took his garments, and made four parts, to every soldier a part; and also his coat: now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout.

They said therefore among themselves, "Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be": that the scripture might be fulfilled, which saith, "They parted my raiment among them,

and for my vesture they did cast lots." These things therefore the soldiers did (John 19:19–24).*

Parallel reference:

And they parted his raiment, and cast lots. And the people stood beholding. And the rulers also with them derided him, saying, "He saved others; let him save himself, if he be Christ, the chosen of God." And the soldiers also mocked him, coming to him, and offering him vinegar, and saying, "If thou be the king of the Jews, save thyself." And a superscription also was written over him in letters of Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew, THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.

And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, "If thou be Christ, save thyself and us." But the other answering rebuked him, saying, "Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss." And he said unto Jesus, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom."

And Jesus said unto him, "Verily I say unto thee, today shalt thou be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:34–43).†

"By the truth that I feel within me, I promise unto you that today after I leave my body thou shalt be in the visible presence of my astral body in the astral world of celestial bliss."

The wonder of divine intercession: a promise of paradise for the repentant thief

We see the wonder of divine intercession in how a thief, by his prayer to the almighty Lord manifest in Jesus, was granted liberation in Spirit. Amazing also is that Jesus, though consumed in his own suffering on the cross, did not fail to respond to the appeal of the conscientious thief crucified beside him. One would fain be crucified by the side of Jesus, that he could appeal to Christ for final emancipation and be instantaneously assured, "Today shalt thou be with me in paradise." The evil actions of an individual, when he is repentant

* Psalms 22:16–18.

† Cf. additional parallel references in Matthew 27:35–44 and Mark 15:24–32.

in an opportune time, can be forgiven by great masters who are the Lord's channels. Thus it is that the thief had almost paid his karmic debt for his sins by being crucified. And at this juncture, when he was extremely repentant and prayed for redemption in the presence of Christ, he forthwith found it at the hands of Jesus. No matter how great one's sins, they will be forgiven if the devotee loves God deeply enough: "enough" is the decisive factor.

Jesus' words speak not only to the thief, but to all humanity about the definite presence of God and His omnipresent abode of bliss ("paradise"), where virtuous souls in the after-death state gather before His Heavenly Majesty and all the liberated saints. In heaven, unlike earth where every being is recognised by his form, souls do not necessarily see God in the form of a human personage. But if they have sufficient good karma, they may behold Him as a Light, or a Voice, or as a blissful Presence speaking through the intuition of all assembled astrally embodied souls. Advanced souls visiting the astral land may see, according to their devotion and degree of Self-realization, any materialised form of the infinitely aspected Father their hearts desire. Just as invisible hydrogen and oxygen gas can be frozen into ice, so also the invisible Spirit can be frozen into a form by the condensing power of deep devotion.

Reality of the Bliss-Abode where Jesus took the thief after death

Jesus meant that on that very day, after his soul and that of the thief had transcended their physical bodies by death and gone on to the astral realm, by his divine power he would summon the astral body of the thief into the blissful presence, the realized perception, of the Father.

Jesus knew that the thief, because of his evil actions, was headed for a lower region of the astral land; but when he found him wholly repentant, he promised him a journey to the higher astral realm, or paradise.

The better regions of the astral world, where everything is controlled by the will power of the mind independent of physical forces, are free from the limitations and miseries of the material earth; nevertheless, its inhabitants are subject to some karmic constraints. The supreme, untrammelled paradise is the state of Cosmic Consciousness and Cosmic Bliss. Advanced souls may experience Cosmic Consciousness in deepest *samadhi;* but it is only on becoming established in this

state that the soul attains absolute oneness with Spirit and is never again compelled to reincarnate on earth.

After death of the physical body, the soul that is not fully released in Spirit retains its visible luminous astral body of nineteen supramental and lifetronic elements and its invisible causal body of thirty-five thoughtronic elements. In the three days between his crucifixion and resurrection, Jesus freed his soul from all ties to his incarnate physical, astral, and causal bodies.* When the soul is liberated from the bondage of all three bodies, it merges with Spirit and remains invisibly present in Infinitude, retaining a formal individuality but in essence becoming one with Spirit.

But every soul immediately after physical death has to go first into the astral paradise of certain limitations. From this paradise, souls may be promoted to the supreme paradise of Cosmic Consciousness, or the super-paradise of the causal world, or demoted to earthly reincarnation. It was in the astral paradise that Jesus promised to meet the thief, where both of them would be "today," immediately after physical death. After Jesus reached the supreme state by ascending out of his astral and causal bodies into Cosmic Consciousness, he could then also take the soul of the redeemed thief into the abode of the completely liberated.

A person with the divine integrity of Jesus Christ would not have promised the thief paradise unless that Bliss-Abode actually existed. Hence each rationally intelligent human being, instead of remaining stupefied with doubt and spiritual indifference, should try with utmost fervour in meditation to break through the static of material restlessness and tune in with the higher realities of the astral paradise, and with the invisible aid of God's angels and liberated saints who dwell there to assist God in the governance of creation and the evolution of souls toward liberation. All devotees who are crucified by evil tendencies and miseries should ask and pray to their Christ Consciousness within, which is crucified by ignorance, for the redemption of the soul from the physical world and its limitations into the greater freedom of consciousness of astral existence, and the eternal paradise of complete liberation in Spirit.

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* See Discourse 75.

> *Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, "Woman, behold thy son!" Then saith he to the disciple, "Behold thy mother!" And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home (John 19:25–27).*

Jesus, feeling a deep spiritual state as he was about to leave his body, spoke to his mother concerning the beloved disciple John, who was with her at the foot of the cross: "Woman, behold thy son." That is, "Take my disciple as your spiritual son." He could not think of Mary as "mother" because in his spiritual consciousness he knew that God alone is Father, Mother, Beloved. Thus Jesus called his mother "woman"—a God-created woman.

In asking her to adopt his beloved spiritual disciple, Jesus was trying to console this exceptional woman who had born his body. Then saying, "Behold thy mother (behold her as your mother)," he sought to please the grief-stricken disciple with the solace of regarding as his own mother the one who had born the incarnate Christ.

> *After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, "I thirst." Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar: and they filled a spunge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and put it to his mouth (John 19:28–29).**

Parallel reference:

> *Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with*

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* "They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink" (Psalms 69:21).

Cf. also Matthew 27:33–34 (and its parallel in Mark 15:22–23): "And when they were come unto a place called Golgotha, that is to say, a place of a skull, they gave him vinegar to drink mingled with gall: and when he had tasted thereof, he would not drink." Gall, according to some historians, here referred to a bitter-tasting drug used to deaden the senses.

a loud voice, saying, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" that is to say, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?"

*Some of them that stood there, when they heard that, said, "This man calleth for Elijah." And straightway one of them ran, and took a spunge, and filled it with vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink. The rest said, "Let be, let us see whether Elijah will come to save him" (Matthew 27:45–49).**

Jesus foresaw much of what was to happen to him, not only through the prophecy of the scriptures but through his own intuition and the analysis of the law of karma governing his life. He had willingly accepted the role God had asked of him. Still, on the cross he unmistakably showed the signs of human struggle against the last tortures and tests of flesh before he entered Spirit. His humanness does not detract from the greatness of Jesus; rather, it exalts him in human eyes. It also infuses hope in frail hearts that by the exercise of sheer will force over the body and its temptations man can conquer the flesh and, as did Jesus, rise from the human to the divine plane.

Jesus' human struggle on the cross: "My God, why hast Thou forsaken me?"

If it is reasoned that Jesus was purely divine, or God descended on earth, then it must be concluded that he did not truly feel the agony of sorrow and struggle on the cross. God, being pure Spirit, could not be affected by the tortures of flesh, mere dream changes in a dream body in His dream-created world. It would be hypocrisy or ridiculous dramatization for Jesus to say, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" If Jesus were God, how could he feel he was separated from Himself? Or if Jesus were a divine being fashioned in perfection by the Creator and sent to earth only to carry out a preordained exemplary mandate, still in his intensity of suffering he would have been merely playacting. Why would God, who is a God of truth, send Jesus to do or to say something that was just a sham?

A veritably human and divine Jesus who struggles with the tortures and temptations of flesh, and by dint of soul force attains victory over them and inherits eternal life, is a great source of inspiration and assurance for weak, sorely tempted human beings. A divine, temptationless Christ who comes on earth to play out mechanically a pre-

* Cf. additional parallel reference in Mark 15:33–36.

arranged part of goodness assigned to him by the Heavenly Father could not strike that spark of hope in human hearts. A mortally transcendent god can conquer temptation because he is not tempted at all; but how could that be expected of a weakling of flesh who is constantly subject to inner and outer temptation, from the very beginning of his life, without any definite warning from God except the feeble voice of indistinct conscience? It would be easy for an immortal god, wearing a body but being unaffected by it, to play out a part of sorrow, forgiveness, and crucifixion; but it is formidably difficult for an innocent human being to conquer hatred of others with love, and to accept and endure an unjustified bodily crucifixion at their hands.

Jesus, by his divine nature, vanquished the promptings of flesh conjured by satanic temptation.* In his human nature, he felt the excruciating pain in the flesh due to the influence of the satanic intelligence, which never waned in its efforts to make Jesus forget God. Thus when the suffering on the cross was intense, Jesus for a while felt God slipping from his consciousness, and in exceedingly great sorrow he cried out, "Father, Father, why hast Thou forsaken me?"

God played hide-and-seek with Jesus, concealed for a moment behind the pangs of Jesus' suffering. And Jesus, childlike, desiring nothing but his Father, was prompt in crying out for his Father's reassuring presence. Just as a little child led by the hand by his father in a dark forest cries out when he momentarily loses his grasp and the sight of him, so also did Jesus when he felt the guiding hand of his Heavenly Father, which had led him through the dense forests of incarnations, slip away in the darkness of suffering. When Jesus' agony became more intense than his awareness of God's presence within himself, he voiced his anguish: "My God, why am I feeling this pain more than Thy presence? Come to me immediately."

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* As previously noted, even fully liberated masters subject themselves to some degree of cosmic delusion as a prerequisite to incarnating and living in the material world in a physical body. Jesus himself had spoken of his attainment of absolute oneness with Spirit as occurring after leaving his physical form: "On the third day I shall be perfected." (See commentary in Discourse 57.)

"For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren. ...For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted" (Hebrews 2:16–18). The limitations voluntarily assumed by God's emissaries descending into earthly incarnation were previously explained (in Discourses 7 and 8).

Jesus addresses God as his very own: "My God, my God"—"my own Father-God." God is a truer friend to man than man is to Him. Though continuously ignored by man, God constantly thinks of him and helps him with power to live, think, feel, and enjoy. He is the Relative of all relatives, without whom we cannot love any kin nor can they love us. For the most part, man's indifference forces God to remain incognito. But to His devotees, as with Jesus, God is known, personal. He comes out of His hiding place in human desires and the folly of delusion and lives on the altar of the devotee's conscious devotion. Thus when in the mordant gloom of physical pain Jesus felt the personal contact of God slip away, he prayed, "My God, You whom I have known consciously to belong to me always, why have You forsaken me?"

That mortal consciousness of separation from God was Satan's test of delusion, opportunely seized upon when God had slipped away to see if Jesus would miss Him. But as soon as Jesus cried out for God, Satan's delusion was defeated. God quickly revealed Himself and restored Jesus' divine consciousness with the realization that the suffering on the cross was a delusive mental dream with no intrinsic reality, and that he was Spirit, everlastingly untouched by suffering.

When Jesus cried out to God, the satanic dream delusion of bodily suffering was defeated

In a dream the solid physical body, the luminous astral body, and the ideational causal body can be perceived as real; when the dreamer completely awakens, those "realities" are understood to be a dream, the result of frozen mind, or materialised imagination. Likewise, in the cosmic dream Jesus was bound by his physical, astral, and causal bodies with their functional instrumentalities of perception and consciousness. It was only when Jesus was completely awake in God, three days after the crucifixion, that the cosmic dream was totally banished in the realization that Spirit alone exists. But that did not ease the difficulty for Jesus while he was on the dream cross and under the influence of the cosmic dream. Pain in a dream causes very real suffering to the dreamer. Only when Jesus lifted his consciousness into Christ Consciousness and Cosmic Consciousness was his suffering on the cross dissolved in the bliss of Spirit, in a rejoicing that his life and travails on earth served then and everlastingly to help awaken other souls in Spirit.

God creates the universe in thought and then materialises it into a dream; but He is able at will to revert the material dream into a universe

of pure thought. Devotees who are in tune with God can realize the thought-dream essentiality of the universe—a dream universe that can be seen as a universe of thought in ecstasy of deep God-communion in meditation.

Just as it is impossible to convince a man having a nightmare that he is not suffering, until he is awake, so also it is very difficult to convince any human being under the influence of this cosmic dream that he is dreaming delusion. But by continuous good company, ever increasingly deep meditation, forsaking evil habits, associating with God-realized saints by emulating their lives and teachings, a spiritual aspirant can awaken in Spirit and prove to himself that this cosmos is a dream. Anyone who would live the teachings of Christ, and keep his godliness intact when crucified by temptation and the unkindness of misunderstanding people, would realize the dream delusion of the body and its limitations and would find emancipation in God.

Jesus proved that he was ready to relinquish the delusive dream, in that he did not want his consciousness of God to be even for an instant obliterated by his giving reality to the body and its painful torture on the cross. While he was capable of accepting the most intense physical suffering, he could not stand the pain of even a moment's separation from God. Jesus showed to all humanity that no matter how great the temptations and tortures of the flesh, if one would continuously cling to God he would surely find ultimate response from Him and complete emancipation. Jesus demonstrated the human qualities of the Heavenly Father, in that He readily responds to human heart-appeals, even as the earthly father is moved by the entreaties of his child.

God does not expect man to be completely free from delusion so long as he wears a human body; but that is not an excuse to surrender to body consciousness. Everyone has in his soul the same power that God has to destroy this delusion; therefore, one must not yield to its incursions, but courageously resist it. It is best to stay away from evil influences by use of the soul power of discrimination, and to commune regularly with the inner Self so that one will know and experience the stronger power of the soul's bliss. God-consciousness is hard to attain, but it is unceasing throughout eternity once it is made one's own.

Rather than giving in to the body in any way, one should endure with evenmindedness every experience that comes. It is not that suf-

fering should be invited, but that the mind should be kept strong when pain and misfortune do come. One who conquers mentally finds there is no more suffering. While entertaining the delusive dream of the body, Jesus felt forsaken by God; but when with all his soul force he summoned the Divine Presence, he regained the realization that the body was made of energy and the nails were made of energy—there was no more suffering. He was free. The more one cedes reality to suffering, the more one will suffer; there will be no end to it until that dream is transcended. Jesus underwent the terrible ordeal on the cross to show us all that experiences of earthly life have no more power to affect us than our nightly dreams when we realize God.*

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When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, "It is finished": and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost (John 19:30).

Parallel references:

Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost.

And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent....

Now when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, "Truly this was the Son of God."

And many women were there beholding afar off, which followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering unto him: Among which was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee's children (Matthew 27:50–51, 54–56).

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* "The ideas of heat and cold, pleasure and pain, are produced by the contacts of the senses with their objects. Such ideas are limited by a beginning and an end. They are transitory, O Descendant of Bharata (Arjuna); bear them with patience!

"O Arjuna! he who cannot be ruffled by these (contacts of the senses with their objects), who is calm and evenminded during pain and pleasure, he alone is fit to attain everlastingness!" (*God Talks With Arjuna: The Bhagavad Gita* II:14–15).

* * *

And it was about the sixth hour, and there was a darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour. And the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was rent in the midst.

And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, "Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit": and having said thus, he gave up the ghost.

*Now when the centurion saw what was done, he glorified God, saying, "Certainly this was a righteous man." And all the people that came together to that sight, beholding the things which were done, smote their breasts, and returned. And all his acquaintance, and the women that followed him from Galilee, stood afar off, beholding these things (Luke 23:44–49).**

When Jesus said, "It is finished," he was declaring, "My work on earth as manifested through this body called Jesus is finished." Jesus surveyed in an instantaneous intuitive perception the general effect of his life's work, performed by his own free will; and he examined it to see how much he had succeeded in carrying out the wishes of his Heavenly Father. Jesus then was satisfied that his life and works had been approved and blessed by God, and that his spirit had overcome satanic delusion and the tests of the flesh and of the Heavenly Father. He then became ready to withdraw his soul from the body and plunge it into Spirit.

Jesus consciously launches his liberated soul into Absolute Spirit

"O transcendental God the Father, into Thine omnipotent presence ('Thy hands'), in Cosmic Consciousness existing beyond all creation, I unite my Christ consciousness ('commend my spirit') felt in this body and throughout the cosmos—lifting it out of the delusive confinement of this bodily cage." Thus Jesus describes his final experience, in which he withdraws not only his bodily consciousness and life force, but also his acquired Christ Consciousness, his omnipresence in creation, to merge in the Father's Cosmic Consciousness beyond.

After death, ordinary persons experience a sort of deep sleep, checkered by certain astral experiences and visions according to the degree of their good karma. (Vicious people, owing to their violent

* Cf. additional parallel reference in Mark 15:37–41.

and passionate earthly existence, have nightmarish experiences.) But divine devotees who by successful meditation and pure devotion to the Lord have freed their souls from the attachment of worldly desires find that death opens a portal to ascension into the blissful omnipresence of the infinite transcendental Father.

When Jesus was to launch his soul into Spirit, all nature recognised the event. The rending of the temple veil, symbolically interpreted, signifies that the spiritually victorious life of Jesus tore aside the veil of mystery that hides the ultimate truth. In a poetic sense it can be said that when Jesus, who was omnisciently present in the cosmos as well as in the temple, passed away and was lost to the physical gaze of the world, even the temple veil could not hide its sorrow: its atoms burst forth and let loose their hidden grief—as did the trembling earth and the darkened sun.

During earthly existence an ordinary individual is only conscious of his body, which, moving from one place to another, sees during the state of wakefulness different portions of materially circumscribed space. However, even the ordinary individual during the state of sleep perceives the higher power of mind working in dreams, unfettered by constraints of the normal laws of physics; and also, during the state of deep dreamless sleep, a limited sphere of the quiescent joy of the soul. In contrast, the Christlike person, even during earthly existence, sees not only limited portions of space through his physical eyes, but also beholds through his spiritual eye of intuition the entire manifested cosmos, illumined by the astral light and Christ Consciousness, with all the planets and stars like glowworms glimmering in the immeasurable vastness of space-time.

Nevertheless, even a saint with Christ Consciousness has certain limitations, in that his awareness embraces all creation—the inconceivably varied *maya*-show of forms and forces interacting in the cosmic matrix of sattvic, rajasic, and tamasic qualities—but not the vibrationless transcendent realm where the Creator Himself abides. In the Bhagavad Gita, the Lord declares: "It is difficult indeed to go beyond the influence of My divine cosmic hypnosis, imbued with the triple qualities. Only those who take shelter in Me become free from this power of illusion."* Jesus Christ demonstrated the utmost fulfilment of this divine promise, lifting his God-surrendered soul into full transcendence with the words: "Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit."

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* *God Talks With Arjuna: The Bhagavad Gita* VII:14.

God the Father is not limited to the transcendental infinitude; He is simultaneously conscious of the eternal void beyond the manifested cosmos as well as every atom and vibratory force within it. Great saints and masters in transcendent states of *samadhi* can commune with the Father present in all creation, but when they reach the final state their "communion" is oneness with the Absolute within and beyond creation.

Cosmic Consciousness or God the Father exists in its pure state beyond all creation, and in secret as the Christ Consciousness in all creation. Spirit, in order to manifest creation, divides Itself into the Father-Creator who transcends creation, the Son or reflected Christ Consciousness within creation, and Cosmic Vibration or Holy Ghost, the substance of creation. Since God has thus created Himself into these three aspects, and into the cosmos and all its creatures, human beings seeking to reunite with Him first have to rise by meditation from the consciousness of plurality to the consciousness of trinity: Holy Ghost, Christ Consciousness, and God the Father. After that, the devotee must attain the final realization of the trinity or triune manifestations of God as the One Absolute Spirit—the ever-existing, ever-conscious, omnipresent, ever-new Bliss.

While incarnate in his human body, Jesus with his Christ Consciousness could feel his omnipresence in the entire cosmos and knew that Christ Consciousness to be a reflection of God's Cosmic Consciousness; but embodiment precluded complete unity with God the Father as the transcendental Absolute. After working out through certain ecstatic purification rites the remaining seeds of his physical, astral, and causal incarnate karma in the three days after crucifixion, Jesus was able to merge his Christ Consciousness with the Cosmic Consciousness, or God the Father, the Absolute beyond all delusory relativities of vibratory manifestation.

The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the Sabbath day, (for that Sabbath day was an high day,) besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away.

Then came the soldiers, and brake the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with him.

*But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs: But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water. And he that saw it bare record, and his record is true: and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe. For these things were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled, "A bone of him shall not be broken." And again another scripture saith, "They shall look on him whom they pierced."**

And after this Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, besought Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus: and Pilate gave him leave. He came therefore, and took the body of Jesus. And there came also Nicodemus, which at the first came to Jesus by night, and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound weight. Then took they the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury.

Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein was never man yet laid. There laid they Jesus therefore because of the Jews' preparation day; for the sepulchre was nigh at hand (John 19:31–42).

Parallel reference:

And now when the even was come, because it was the preparation, that is, the day before the Sabbath, Joseph of Arimathea, an honourable counsellor, which also waited for the kingdom of God, came, and went in boldly unto Pilate, and craved the body of Jesus. And Pilate marvelled if he were already dead: and calling unto him the centurion, he asked him whether he had been any while dead. And when he knew it of the centurion, he gave the body to Joseph.

And he bought fine linen, and took him down, and wrapped him in the linen, and laid him in a sepulchre which was hewn out of a rock, and rolled a stone unto the door of the sepulchre.

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* The first reference is to Psalms 34:20; the second to Zechariah 12:10: "And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn."

*And Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses beheld where he was laid (Mark 15:42–47).**

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* Cf. additional parallel references in Matthew 27:57–61 and Luke 23:50–56.

See also Matthew 27:62–66, which includes the following details not recounted in the other Gospels:

"Now the next day, that followed the day of the preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate, saying, 'Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, "After three days I will rise again." Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night, and steal him away, and say unto the people, "He is risen from the dead": so the last error shall be worse than the first.'

"Pilate said unto them, 'Ye have a watch: go your way, make it as sure as ye can.'

"So they went, and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch."

DISCOURSE 75

"Lo, I Am With You Always"

The Resurrection of Jesus, and His Ever-Living Presence

Three Stages of Jesus' Ascension Into Spirit After Death

❖

Jesus' Transmission of Spiritual Consciousness to His Disciples While on Earth and Afterward

❖

Science of Yoga Provides the Means of Resurrection and Ascension to Every Soul

❖

Jesus' Final Instructions to and Blessings on His Disciples, and His Dematerialisation Into Spirit

❖

The Universality of the Message That Christ Wanted His Disciples to Preach Worldwide

"Liberated souls such as Jesus, whose mission continues beyond their incarnation, are able to materialise their bodies at will...today or unto thousands of years after their ascension....Any true devotee can see him as Jesus Christ or know him as one with the Infinite Christ."

The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre. Then she runneth, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and saith unto them, "They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him."

Peter therefore went forth, and that other disciple, and came to the sepulchre. So they ran both together: and the other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulchre. And he stooping down, and looking in, saw the linen clothes lying; yet went he not in.

Then cometh Simon Peter following him, and went into the sepulchre, and seeth the linen clothes lie, and the napkin, that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself.

Then went in also that other disciple, which came first to the sepulchre, and he saw, and believed. For as yet they knew not the scripture, that he must rise again from the dead. Then the disciples went away again unto their own home.

But Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping: and as she wept, she stooped down, and looked into the sepulchre, and seeth two angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. And they say unto her, "Woman, why weepest thou?" She saith unto them, "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him."

And when she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus.

Jesus saith unto her, "Woman, why weepest thou? Whom seekest thou?"

She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, "Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away."

Jesus saith unto her, "Mary."

She turned herself, and saith unto him, "Rabboni"; which is to say, Master.

Jesus saith unto her, "Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God."

Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that he had spoken these things unto her.

—John 20:1–18

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[Variant telling recorded in the Gospel According to St. Luke:]

Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain others with them. And they found the stone rolled away from the sepulchre. And they entered in, and found not the body of the Lord Jesus.

And it came to pass, as they were much perplexed thereabout, behold, two men stood by them in shining garments: And as they were afraid, and bowed down their faces to the earth, they said unto them, "Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen: remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee, saying, 'The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.'" And they remembered his words, and returned from the sepulchre, and told all these things unto the eleven, and to all the rest.

It was Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and Mary the mother of James, and other women that were with them, which told these things unto the apostles. And their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not.

Then arose Peter, and ran unto the sepulchre; and stooping down, he beheld the linen clothes laid by themselves, and departed, wondering in himself at that which was come to pass.

And, behold, two of them went that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem about threescore

furlongs. And they talked together of all these things which had happened. And it came to pass, that, while they communed together and reasoned, Jesus himself drew near, and went with them. But their eyes were holden that they should not know him.

And he said unto them, "What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad?"

And the one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answering said unto him, "Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days?"

And he said unto them, "What things?"

And they said unto him, "Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people: And how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him to be condemned to death, and have crucified him. But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, today is the third day since these things were done. Yea, and certain women also of our company made us astonished, which were early at the sepulchre; and when they found not his body, they came, saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that he was alive. And certain of them which were with us went to the sepulchre, and found it even so as the women had said: but him they saw not."

Then he said unto them, "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?" And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.

And they drew nigh unto the village, whither they went: and he made as though he would have gone further. But they constrained him, saying, "Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent." And he went in to tarry with them.

And it came to pass, as he sat at meat with them, he took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them. And their

eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight.

And they said one to another, "Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?"

And they rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them, saying, "The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon." And they told what things were done in the way, and how he was known of them in breaking of bread.

And as they thus spake, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, "Peace be unto you." But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit.

And he said unto them, "Why are ye troubled? And why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have." And when he had thus spoken, he shewed them his hands and his feet.

And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, he said unto them, "Have ye here any meat?" And they gave him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb. And he took it, and did eat before them.

And he said unto them, "These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me." Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, and said unto them, "Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things. And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high."

—Luke 24:1–49

* * *

[Additional details recorded in the Gospel According to St. John:]

***Then the same day** at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, "Peace be unto you." And when he had so said, he shewed unto them his hands and his side. Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord.*

Then said Jesus to them again, "Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you."

And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost: Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained."

But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore said unto him, "We have seen the Lord."

But he said unto them, "Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe."

And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, "Peace be unto you."

Then saith he to Thomas, "Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing."

And Thomas answered and said unto him, "My Lord and my God."

Jesus saith unto him, "Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."

And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.

—John 20:19–31

DISCOURSE 75

"Lo, I Am With You Always"

The Resurrection of Jesus, and His Ever-Living Presence*

All things are possible unto God and His great devotees. In the resurrection of Jesus we have the assurance of our Creator that God-realized devotees, if they wish, can find not only immortality of the soul but also of the body.

The whole drama of Jesus' life was a testament to the supremacy of man's spirit over matter. He had willingly incarnated in a human form, partaking of its inherent limitations, to show matter-bound souls the way to conquer every form of delusion imposed on them by the overreaching power of Cosmic Satan. Jesus' resurrection demonstrated the consummation of that victory: "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death."†

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* The resurrection of Jesus is recounted in all four Gospels, each relating certain details not recorded in the other three or sometimes in contradiction to each other. For this Discourse, Bible verses from the four Gospels have been arranged so they can be read as a continuous narrative that presents the story as completely as possible—covering the material in Matthew 28, Mark 16, Luke 24, and John 20 and 21 (but minimizing unnecessary repetition).

† 1 Corinthians 15:26. See also Saint Paul's words about Jesus in Hebrews 2:14–15: "Forasmuch then as [men] are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage."

Resurrection means "to rise again." What rises again—and how? Though restoring life to a deceased body, as Jesus did for Lazarus, is indeed one form of resurrection, what Jesus evidenced after his crucifixion was much higher. It was the resurrection of the soul into oneness with Spirit—the soul's ascension from delusory confinement of body consciousness into its native immortality and everlasting freedom. Lazarus and others whose bodies were raised from the dead by Jesus gained new life, new opportunity for spiritual advancement; but Jesus' resurrection lifted his consciousness beyond all relativities of vibratory creation and merged his Self with the transcendental Father, Absolute Spirit.

After attaining oneness with the Absolute, Jesus infused his Spirit-expanded soul back into his crucified body, immortalizing it, and returned to his bereft disciples in physical form.

Jesus accomplished this ascension in definite steps after his crucifixion. To Mary Magdalene, who was the first disciple to see him on Easter morning, Jesus said: "Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God."

Why did he tell Mary not to touch him? What did he mean when he said, "I am not yet ascended to my Father"? There is deep significance here. Jesus had prophesied that he would rise again after "three days" or "on the third day" after his crucifixion: "'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.'... He spake of the temple of his body."* "Three days" means in three periods. Jesus was not emphasizing in a literal sense the twenty-four hours in each day, but three phases of expression required to liberate his soul from the physical to the astral plane and then to the spiritual or causal plane, and from there to complete mergence in the Cosmic Consciousness of the Father. Many incarnations are required for an unevolved soul to accomplish this. But Jesus knew the process of descent into flesh that had been required for the incarnation on earth of his previously liberated soul, and with this knowledge and power he needed simply to employ the creative principles that would reverse that process. Thus he would quickly be able to free his soul again from physical, astral, and causal limitations by three distinct efforts, and would be able to reunite it with the omniscience and omnipotence of the Spirit.

Three stages of Jesus' ascension into Spirit after death

* John 2:19–21. He also made numerous similar prophecies in the other three Gospels.

When the consciousness experiences oneness with the Infinite Consciousness of God in a state of deep *samadhi* while the soul yet retains its residence in the physical body (or in the astral form encasing the causal body after death), the transcendent ecstatic consciousness will inevitably return to its bodily habitation (physical or astral as the case may be). Similarly, when Jesus entered *mahasamadhi,* a God-realized soul's conscious ascension from the physical body at the time of death, he merged his consciousness in the blissful presence of the Cosmic Consciousness of God the Father and thence returned to his yet-to-be relinquished heavenly garbed astral form. Therein in Christ ecstasy he began expeditiously to unloose, with the supreme soul-science of liberation, the knots of life and consciousness that both enabled and resulted from his earthly incarnation.

Expressed succinctly, human nature is an interaction of the three *gunas* or essential creative and motivating qualities of Cosmic Nature, identified in the scriptures of India as *sattva, tamas,* and *rajas*—the good or elevating mode, the evil or grossening mode, and the activating mode.* The seeds of one's past actions, actions that were stimulated by the good, bad, and activating qualities, remain subtly lodged in the astral and causal bodies of the physically dead individual. As the Bhagavad Gita states: "All action is universally engendered by the attributes (*gunas*) of primordial Nature (Prakriti)....Deluded by the attributes of primordial Nature, the ignorant must cling to the activities engendered by those *gunas.*"† Overcoming the sattvic, rajasic, and tamasic karma invading the three bodies of man is required for any incarnate soul to disengage from Nature's delusive domain and return to oneness with the eternal bliss of Spirit. "The *gunas* inherent in Prakriti—*sattva, rajas,* and *tamas*—imprison in the body the Imperishable Dweller....Having transcended the three modes of Nature—the cause of physical embodiment—a man is released from the sufferings of birth, old age, and death; he attains immortality."‡

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* The *gunas,* quiescent in Spirit, are stirred by God the Creator to bring forth cosmic creation in its spiritual, gross, and active manifestations; and in the microcosm of man to manifest the instrumentalities of consciousness, mind, and senses and to influence the expression thereof. (See references detailing the intricate science of the action of the *gunas* in Paramahansaji's commentaries on relevant verses in *God Talks With Arjuna: The Bhagavad Gita.*)

† *God Talks With Arjuna: The Bhagavad Gita* III:27, 29.

‡ *God Talks With Arjuna: The Bhagavad Gita* XIV:5, 20.

When Jesus first appeared to Mary Magdalene, he had raised his body from the tomb, yet he said, "Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father." That is, his soul had not finished working out all the entangling interactions of the three *gunas* imprinted in his astral and causal bodies so that he could leave their limitations in oneness with Spirit. That accomplished, he would have the freedom and omnipotence of Spirit to remain merged in Infinite Consciousness or to assume his immortalized familiar form, tangible to mortal senses but unsubject to incarnate circumscriptions. Until he was thus completely resurrected in Spirit, he did not want any physical vibration with its material grossness to have contact with his manifested form that was highly spiritualized with astral lifetronic vibrations. Such was the superphysical nature of the body of Jesus that Mary did not at first even recognise the form as that of Jesus.

By the power of his Christ-wisdom and the sattvic karma accrued through his free-will governed righteous actions on earth,* Jesus burned out the last traces of karmic residue left by his flesh-engendered fear of death when he said: "Father, if Thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but Thine, be done"; and when on the cross he cried: "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" The delusion of his painful mortal death was so persuasive that for a moment Jesus lost touch with the reality that an Omnipresent God, his own Divine Father, could never forsake him. Delusion-imposed metaphysical weaknesses, no matter how tenuous, have to be expunged before complete liberation in Spirit is attained, even by such superlative incarnate souls as Jesus.

The esoteric science of liberation from the physical, astral, and causal forms

If a man is locked in a room, it requires the opening of just one lock to get him out. But if someone locks him in three rooms (one inside the other), it will require the unlatching of three locks to free him. At death the soul withdraws its life and intelligence from the physical body, but still remains locked up within the astral and causal bodies.

The soul, encased in its informing astral and causal bodies, enters the physical body through the medulla oblongata "mouth of God,"† the

* "A man who dies with *sattva* qualities predominant rises to the taintless regions in which dwell knowers of the Highest" (*God Talks With Arjuna: The Bhagavad Gita* XIV:14).

† See Discourse 8.

Jesus With Mary Magdalene at the Tomb

Jesus saith unto her, "Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou?"

She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, "Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away."

Jesus saith unto her, "Mary."

She turned herself, and saith unto him, "Rabboni"; which is to say, Master.

—John 20:15–16

Jesus' resurrection lifted his consciousness beyond all relativities of vibratory creation and merged his Self with the transcendental Father, Absolute Spirit. After attaining oneness with the Absolute, Jesus infused his Spirit-expanded soul back into his crucified body, immortalizing it, and returned to his bereft disciples in physical form....

Liberated souls such as Jesus, whose mission continues beyond their incarnation, are able to materialize their bodies at will anywhere in the astral heavens or in the physical world at any time—today or unto thousands of years after their ascension. That is why Jesus could say in truth to his disciples: "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

—Paramahansa Yogananda

Drawing by Heinrich Hofmann

potential of which is in the primary cell of life formed at conception. It is the soul's causal-body instruments of consciousness and intelligence and its astral-body instruments of life force, mental perception, and action that enliven and sustain the fleshly form. The soul and its astral and causal bodies are knotted to the physical form in the seven subtle cerebrospinal centres. When the mortal karmic sentence determining one's lifespan is over, the astral- and causal-bodied soul is loosed from those knots in the seven centres that had tied it to that physical body.

When the ordinary person dies, his life and consciousness withdraw from the physical spine and exit the material body through the medulla oblongata—remaining in an astral body in the astral world until his karma ordains graduation to the higher causal world or reincarnation on the physical plane. But the yogi who has opened his spiritual eye perceives with it that hidden in the physical spine are four concentric tubes or tunnels—three lifetronic and one of ideational magnetism—through which his soul has descended into the causal body, the astral body, and finally the material body. The yogi reverses this descension by taking his soul through these four tunnels and seven secret obstructing doors or centres, ascending to freedom beyond encasement in all three bodies.

Within the physical spine is the outermost astral spine or *sushumna,* with its outward-branching astral *nadis,* the subtle counterpart of the physical nervous system. Within the *sushumna* is the *vajra* lifetronic tunnel, and within that is the *chitra* lifetronic tunnel. By transitioning through the threefold astral spine of *sushumna, vajra,* and *chitra,* the yogi is freed from the astral body and is then in a causal body, an ideational matrix of magnetized consciousness, in the causal world. By further advancement, he frees himself from the causal body by transition through the causal "spine," the innermost channel, or *brahmanadi* —ascending out of his causal form into the Infinite Brahman or Spirit.*

"He attains the Supreme Effulgent Lord, O Arjuna, whose mind, stabilized by yoga, is immovably fixed on the thought of Him. At the time of death a yogi reaches the Supreme Effulgent Lord if, with love and by the power of yoga, he fully penetrates his life force between the eyebrows (the seat of the spiritual eye), and if he fixes his mind unwaveringly on the Being who, beyond all delusions of darkness, shines like

* For a more definitive understanding of the nature and function of the *sushumna, vajra, chitra,* and *brahmanadi,* see *God Talks With Arjuna: The Bhagavad Gita,* commentary on I:4–6, in the section entitled "Yoga Physiology of the Astral and Causal Bodies"; and also, commentary on VIII:23–26.

the sun—the One whose form is unimaginable, subtler than the finest atom, the Supporter of all, the Great Ruler, eternal and omniscient."*

This transcendent freedom can be achieved by the yogi who has not only opened his spiritual eye, but by further concentration has discovered its inner mechanism—when one is sufficiently advanced to leave the body through the blue Christ-sphere and the star door to Cosmic Consciousness in the spiritual eye. Otherwise one passes only through the outermost, golden ring of the spiritual eye and exits the material body through the astral centre in the medulla oblongata at the base of the skull. But departure can also be through the top of the head, through the occult portal known as the *Brahmarandhra,* Brahma's Door. This is in the seventh astral centre, the *sahasrara* or "thousand-petalled lotus" in the cerebrum. It is closed in the ordinary individual; but when one is highly advanced this Brahma's Door opens. Through it one reaches Brahma directly; by exiting consciously through that opening in the thousand-petalled lotus centre of Cosmic Consciousness one ascends directly to the God the Father region.

The golden disc is the portion of the telescopic eye through which all astral creation is visible. To reach the astral universe, one must go through the gold of the spiritual eye. Through the blue of the spiritual eye, Christ Consciousness present in all creation is revealed. To reach the causal universe one must go through the blue region of the spiritual eye. When one can enter the tiny silvery white star of the spiritual eye, then through the *brahmanadi* one ascends higher than the medulla or spiritual eye, beyond the physical, astral, and causal vibratory universes.

In the astral region is the reigning Holy Ghost or *Aum* Vibration. In the causal is God the Son, or the Christ Consciousness. And the vibrationless infinitude beyond, reached through the star in the spiritual eye, is the boundless region where Cosmic Consciousness, God the Father, dwells.

It is impossible with mere intellect to comprehend fully the intricacies of the astral and causal passageways to liberation and their correlation with the spiritual eye. They are gradually revealed to intuitive perception by the practice of *Kriya Yoga.* What is important is to be so absorbed in the spiritual eye and divine bliss of meditation that when the time comes to leave the body, through the blessings of God and guru the yogi knows how to take his soul through the spiritual

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* *God Talks With Arjuna: The Bhagavad Gita* VIII:8–10.

eye and the spinal centres and break out of the jail of embodiment into the freedom of Spirit.

Ascension to liberation is not a simple matter of a few affirmations, prayers, or desultory attempts at meditation. It can only be achieved by persistent practise of scientific methods of penetrating the spiritual eye. No soul, no saint, no Christ or Buddha has resurrected himself—at the time of death or in the highest *samadhi* states of meditation—without entering this inner door to transcendent consciousness. As soon as one frees the soul from the physical, astral, and idea bodies, he can merge with the Formless Absolute or experience oneness with the Great Light of the universe. That is the light of the Infinite Christ, the God-essence and sustenance of all creation.*

So resurrection does not mean only resurrection of the body, but the ascension of the soul from all three bodily encasements to live immortally in oneness with the Spirit that is manifesting as the whole universe. When after death Jesus had neutralized the mechanism of the three *gunas,* and had burnt all karmic seeds resulting from his incarnate cause-effect actions, he ascended from the three bodies straightway into the bosom of God. Then he had power even as God has. From that supreme state, Jesus could put on his body again or cast it off at will.

How Jesus re-created his deceased body after ascending in Spirit

A liberated master such as Jesus need not depend on the natural way of returning to earth by the slow process of rebirth and growth into maturity. When one becomes Spirit, he can materialise a body and lock himself in it, then dematerialise it any time he chooses. If a person comes

* "The *Brahmarandhra* [is] the door between two creations, material and spiritual. When Ego, the son of man, comes to the door, he comprehends the Spiritual Light and becomes baptized therein. And passing through this door he comes above the ideational creation of Darkness, *Maya,* and entering into the spiritual world, receives the true Light and becomes the Son of God. Thus man, being the Son of God, overcomes all bondage of Darkness, *Maya,* and becomes possessed of all *aiswaryas,* the ascetic majesties....

"Man, being possessed of *aiswaryas,* the ascetic majesties aforesaid, fully comprehends the Eternal Spirit, the Father, the only Real Substance, as Unit, the Perfect Whole, and his Self as nothing but a mere idea resting on a fragment of the Spiritual Light thereof. Man, thus comprehending, abandons altogether the vain idea of the separate existence of his own Self and becomes unified with Him, the Eternal Spirit, God the Father. This unification with God is *Kaivalya* [liberation], the ultimate goal of man.... See Revelation 3:21: 'To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in His throne.'"—Swami Sri Yukteswar, in *The Holy Science* (published by Yogoda Satsanga Society of India).

down a stairway and somebody locks the door behind him, he cannot go back up. But if he possesses the key, he can go up and come down as he pleases. So Jesus, having unlocked his soul from the physical, astral, and causal forms, could not only ascend into Spirit but also come down again and bring a new body with him. Even as God by special creation formed the bodies of the first Adam and Eve, so ascended masters, after they rise above the limiting confines of the three bodies, can create a body that they had in any incarnation; or can remodel the bodies that they left behind in death, as Jesus' body was, and make them immortal. Thus Jesus after crucifixion could appear among his disciples for forty days, materialising and dematerialising his form before their eyes.

Rationalizing minds have proposed that when Jesus was crucified he did not actually die, but remained in a temporary state of suspended animation and later revived himself (or was taken from the tomb and revived by his disciples). That is not so. In suspended animation, the soul does not exit fully from the body; life remains in the spine and the brain, sustaining the body, even though breath and heart are completely suspended. When the soul, with its astral and causal bodies, goes away completely from the cerebrospinal plexuses, withdrawing the guiding intelligence and life force that empowers the specialized functions of life energy in the bodily cells, then the cells begin to disintegrate and the body begins to decay.* As long as the soul is still in the body, the body does not decay even when all outwardly observable vital functions cease.

It is known that there are various kinds of bodily suspension from which "resurrection" is possible. Sadhu Haridas, for example, as cited earlier, was buried forty days in a deathlike trance, and was then disinterred and revived.† But it is nonsense to suggest that Jesus was only in a state of suspended animation. Spiritually I know that after crucifixion Jesus completely left his body. His life and consciousness fled not only from the physical muscles and heart, but also from the spine and brain. He gave up the ghost; soul and life were completely out of that body. The gruesome way that his body was crucified—pierced in many places, including the heart—made it impossible for the highly organised physiological life to remain in that body. That is why Saint John testified:

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*Cosmic energy in the body works as five specialized currents, empowering the performance of the crystallizing (*prana*), assimilating (*samana*), eliminating (*apana*), metabolizing (*udana*), and circulatory (*vyana*) activities of the body.

†See Discourse 8 for details of story of Sadhu Haridas.

"Then came the soldiers, and brake the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs: But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water. And he that saw it bare record, and his record is true: and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe."*

The human body is not like a plant, which can be cut in different pieces, each of which will grow into a plant. In all those parts there is life and intelligence sufficient to generate a new organism. But in the human body, life is highly centralized in the medulla. From this "mouth of God," the specialized life forces needed to maintain the intricately organised human body, endowed with intelligence from the superconsciousness of the indwelling soul, flow out into the body through the subdynamos of the spinal plexuses aided by the subsidiary switchboard of the heart. Though in suspended animation life is withdrawn from the heart and other bodily organs, if the medulla or the heart is somehow damaged while the body is in the trance state then life cannot be reintroduced, and death ensues.

It cannot be physically proved that the soul has gone out of the body unless the body has been destroyed or its vital organs irreparably damaged, or (as mentioned above) decay has started. When decay sets in, the soul ordinarily cannot return to that body. But Jesus understood the relation between Cosmic Life and the specialized life in the body. That is why he could revive Lazarus after his disciple's body had been decaying for four days;† and why he could say of himself: "I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father."‡ That Jesus was able to rebuild his body at will after death had claimed it was possible only when his soul was liberated from the three bodies. Having attained complete ascension in Spirit, he had the creative power of Spirit to bring specialized life back into his deceased body to regenerate its cells and resurrect that form to live and breathe again.

Now Jesus had the option to resurrect his crucified body or to dematerialise that form and create a new body composed of new atoms

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* John 19:32–35.

† See Discourse 60, explanation of how Jesus accomplished this.

‡ John 10:17–18 (see Discourse 52).

for his reappearance after resurrection. As Spirit, he perceived his old body as Infinite Consciousness, ideationally formed of Cosmic Light, existing as a material illusion in the merest tremor of the Creator's thought. An illusion and its duplicate are equally the same. Grossness, light, consciousness, all are of the sole essence of Spirit, as real or as insubstantial as the delusion of cosmic manifestation deems them to be. To the Spirit-united Jesus, his form was only a dream image of malleable thought subject to the command of his divine will. He was able to infuse his life into his spiritualized flesh-and-blood form, coursing into the body through the mouth of God in the medulla, down through the spine, and out into the vital nerves and organs. He did it scientifically, through the creative Cosmic Vibration of Holy Ghost and oneness with the Christ Consciousness Intelligence of God in every atom and creative principle of cosmic manifestation.

Medical scientists work to achieve bodily healing and reconstruction from the outside; but some injuries and diseases defy cure, because the doctors do not understand the combined interaction of lifetronic currents that forms new flesh and tissues. But one who has control of Cosmic Life as well as specialized life can bring the intelligent Cosmic Energy into the physical form to reinforce and rouse the specific bodily life forces. As soon as that is done, the cells begin to throb with life and to repair or dispel damaged and dead cells. That is what Jesus did. And when the body was renewed, he lived again in his resurrected form.

Knowing the reality of the physical body as divine light

Man thinks of his body as compact, solid matter; but science now defines the body as waves of electromagnetic energy. Matter has been dissolved down to photons. But what is the difference between light and consciousness; and what is the relation of consciousness and the body? The decipherment of that arcanum of cosmic being is the principal challenge confronting future generations of broadened scientific minds.* The body is nothing but electrons and their subatomic magnetic companions whirling in empty space. We

* Professor N. C. Panda, Ph.D., former Dean of Orissa University in India, writes in *Maya in Physics* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1991): "Shankara, the non-dualist philosopher of India, has recognised the consciousness of particles long back in the eighth century. Some physicists, like Evan H. Walker, speculate that photons may be conscious. He remarks: 'Consciousness may be associated with all quantum mechanical processes....Since everything that occurs is ultimately the result of one or more quantum mechanical events, the universe is "inhabited" by an almost unlimited number of

can release them and dissolve that illusion of solidity, but even the most advanced laboratory cannot restructure that body. Resurrection means to bring the body back again by the power of will after it has been disintegrated, as Jesus did when his resurrected form repeatedly appeared and disappeared before many of his disciples. He had that control of the electricity of the entire cosmos, with its constituent lifetronic creative cosmic energy.

Jesus said, "If therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light." By taking his consciousness through the spiritual eye, he entered the reality of his fleshly body as divine light, the resurrection of flesh into the Infinite Christ and God. In deep meditation on the inner spiritual eye, one can experience this transcendence: By consciously withdrawing the life energy and consciousness from the senses and muscles and nerves, one can perceive the sublimation of the body into the rays of the spiritual eye, transforming the consciousness of flesh into the consistency of light. The light of the body is resurrected into the Cosmic Christ Light, the mind into Cosmic Consciousness, the human will into Divine Will, the mortal life into Eternal Life, the joy of the soul into the Bliss of Spirit.

The ocean is behind all individual waves. So is God behind the cells of our body, behind every thought, behind every breath and beat of the heart. He is the Light and the body is a flicker of that Light; its fibres, rays of radiant energy. That is what Jesus realized. He could resurrect his body because he knew its atoms and subatomic particles were nothing but radiations of that Great Light. With control of that Infinite Power and Intelligence, he condensed it into astral lifetronic

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rather discrete conscious, usually nonthinking entities that are responsible for the detailed working of the universe.'...

"Brahman, which is Reality, is pure Consciousness....This Consciousness is reflected in maya and the products of maya. As a result, all insentient things of the universe gain consciousness. There is nothing, whether macro or micro, stars or photons, that are completely unconscious. When considered in this context, the proton, electron, neutron, neutrino, and photon are all conscious within their respective limits."

"I regard consciousness as fundamental," said Max Planck, one of the great founders of quantum physics. "I regard matter as derivative from consciousness. We cannot get behind consciousness. Everything that we talk about, everything that we regard as existing, postulates consciousness." (Quoted in *The Observer,* London, January 25, 1931.)

As Nobel laureate Eugene Wigner put it in *Symmetries and Mysteries* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1970): "The formal inclusion of consciousness in physics could well become an essential feature of any further advance in our scientific understanding." *(Publisher's Note)*

energy to renew and vitalize the cells and nervous system of his crucified body to make it a fit habitation in which his soul could dwell again, in fulfilment of the divine demonstration of resurrection he had been commanded by his Father to give to the world.

Bodily resurrection as understood and demonstrated by India's masters

Resurrection has been well understood by accomplished yogis of India since the dawn of the highest ages. Jesus himself was a realized yogi: one who knew and had mastered the spiritual science of life and death, God-communion and God-union, one who knew the method of liberation from delusion into the kingdom of God. Jesus showed throughout his life and death his power of complete mastery over his body and mind and the oft-recalcitrant forces of nature. We understand resurrection in its true sense when we comprehend the yoga science that clearly defines the underlying principles by which Jesus resurrected his crucified body into the freedom and light of God.

Legendary are the God-knowing masters of India who raised their bodies after death. The revered medieval master Kabir had a devout following that included both Hindu and Muslim disciples. A story is told that at the time of his death there was a divisive quarrel regarding the funeral rites. The Hindus argued that it would be proper to consign the body to the ceremonial fires of cremation, and the Muslims insisted on their tradition of burial. Their discord was so distressing to their master that he broke the after-death paramount vow of silence. He rose up and in a voice of rebuke and of assurance of his ever-living presence he told his disciples: "Half of my remains should be buried with Muslim rites. Let the other half be cremated with a Hindu sacrament." When the disciples lifted the shroud that had covered Kabir's form, they found that their master had dematerialised his body and left in its stead an array of flowers. Dutifully, half of the blooms were cremated by the Hindus, and the remaining half buried by the Muslims.

In modern times, authoritative eyewitness accounts bore testimony that the Yogavatar Lahiri Mahasaya consciously left his body before a gathering of devotees in Banaras; and then appeared again in the flesh in three different cities the day after his discarded body had been cremated.* I myself was blessed to receive the visitation of my resurrected guru Sri Yukteswarji, who appeared to me in flesh and blood more than

* Recorded in *Autobiography of a Yogi*, Chapter 36.

three months after his death in 1936.* Other masters, such as Mahavatar Babaji, choose to retain their bodies indefinitely to best fulfil their service to humanity, their earthly immortality revealed to only a spiritually elite few. Mahavatar Babaji, his soul fully resurrected in Spirit, works for the upliftment of the world in omnipresent oneness with the Infinite God and as the specific finite body he inhabits.

Just as in the exalted state of *nirvikalpa samadhi* the soul realizes perfect unity with Spirit yet does not lose its individuality, so the resurrected Jesus—having ascended from the confinement of his physical, astral, and causal bodies into the Infinite-bodied Cosmic Consciousness—manifested his Jesus form not apart from Spirit but as the Infinite who has become Jesus, all individualized souls, and all manifestation. In his oneness with Spirit, he perceived through Infinite Consciousness his Jesus body, and the bodies of all others, acting their parts in the cosmic dream-drama, with the power of cosmic delusion designating form and egoity but no longer hiding the connection between God's dream and the personalized dream of individual existence. With his consciousness translated into God's consciousness, he could change the dream of his crucified body into a remodeled resurrected dream form in God's cosmic dream.

The divinely manifested form in which Jesus appeared after resurrection

Though Jesus returned to his disciples for forty days after his resurrection, reappearing in the physical body so familiar to his followers, his divinely manifested flesh prevented them from easily recognising him.† His resurrected body was indeed possessed of its customary solidity, though during those forty days he repeatedly resolved its atoms into the Cosmic Light—"he vanished out of their sight"—and at other times rematerialised it before his astonished disciples: "And as they thus spake, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them." "Then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, 'Peace be unto you.'"

Rejoining the apostles on the evening of his resurrection day, Jesus ate with them broiled fish and honeycomb, an act of confirmation of his physical reality. Thereby he also kept his promise made to them at

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* See *Autobiography of a Yogi,* Chapter 43, "The Resurrection of Sri Yukteswar."

† Cf. Luke 9:29 and Matthew 17:2 (Discourse 45). To the two disciples on the road to Emmaus (Mark 16:12) "he appeared in another form...." The followers of Lahiri Mahasaya who beheld the Yogavatar after his death likewise stated that his resurrected form, though identical to the one they had known, appeared "younger and more radiant" (*Autobiography of a Yogi,* Chapter 36).

the Last Supper: "I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God," until the prophesied culmination of his life—his crucifixion and resurrection—had been fulfilled, and he had been freed completely in the immortality of the Cosmic Consciousness of the Father.

"Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures." Jesus transmitted to them from his own omniscient consciousness an awakening of their intuitive soul-perception. Just as a rich man can share his wealth with those he deems worthy, so great masters possessing spiritual abundance can, by sheer divine grace, enlarge their faithful disciples' endowment of God-realization. Jesus had demonstrated this during his incarnation, when he imparted to his apostles "power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease."* After his resurrection, he again spiritually baptized them with the Cosmic Vibratory Power of *Aum:* "He breathed on them, and saith unto them, 'Receive ye the Holy Ghost.'"

Jesus' transmission of spiritual consciousness to his disciples while on earth and afterward

Liberated masters are unrestrained in the omnipresence of the Infinite, fully capable of bestowing their blessings even after physical death. Not only did the contact of Jesus in his resurrected form confer on his disciples an uplifting baptism in the Light of Spirit, he also gave his assurance of further grace to be received by them on the day of Pentecost after his departure: "And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high."†

To the degree that their consciousness was immersed in the Holy Ghost *Aum* Vibration, the disciples would be able to serve as channels for Christ to impart that baptism or initiation to others, lessening or removing the bondage of their bad karma: "Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them."

The disciple Thomas was not present on the first occasion of Jesus' appearance to the assembled disciples; he was unwilling to acknowledge Jesus' resurrection without the proof of personal experience. When he had that opportunity eight days later, the Master

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* Matthew 10:1 (see Discourse 40).

† See Acts 2:1–21 (Discourse 70).

declared to him: "Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."* Though "doubting Thomas" has since become a proverbial aspersion, it should be noted that on other occasions Jesus extolled the high state of consciousness that Thomas had attained.† Followers of all spiritual paths ought to appreciate the fact that doubt, constructively applied, is what keeps true religion free of the superstition of dogma and the fanaticism of blind belief. Religion should be treated as a science; it is right that it be subjected to the test of experience. For millenniums in India, the *rishis*, as spiritual scientists, employed reason, observation, and systematic investigation to arrive at definite and replicable proof of divine truths. When religion is approached scientifically, belief matures into realization—a direct knowing by soul intuition that bestows the blessed certitude of unshakable faith even upon "they that have not seen," independent of the physical senses.

Jesus' resurrection was little understood, and much disbelieved even though he made himself visible to hundreds of people—not only to his close disciples.‡ In those days they comprehended only that Jesus was dead and then he was alive, but they did not understand the science and art of ascension and resurrection, as is defined in the timeless scriptures of Yoga. No other science has detailed the descent of the individualized consciousness of God as the soul into man and its evolutionary and spiritual ascent back into Spirit. In this modern age, *Kriya Yoga* has been brought forward after being lost in the dark ages, as a definite method to hasten the spiritual evolution of human consciousness and open the inner cerebrospinal pathway of ascension, releasing the soul through

Science of yoga provides the means of resurrection and ascension to every soul

* Lahiri Mahasaya once asked Mahavatar Babaji to materialise himself to satisfy the curiosity of some friends. Babaji chastised his disciple: "Lahiri, do you call me for a trifle?" The master's gaze was stern. "Truth is for earnest seekers, not for those of idle curiosity. It is easy to believe when one sees; no soul searchings are then necessary. Supersensual truth is deservedly discovered by those who overcome their natural materialistic scepticism." (See *Autobiography of a Yogi*, Chapter 34.)

† "Because you have drunk, you have become intoxicated from the bubbling spring which I have measured out" (Gospel of Thomas, verse 13). See Introduction, page xxxii n. To this day, stories survive of the travels and divine works of Thomas during his years and ultimate death in South India. *(Publisher's Note)*

‡ I Corinthians 15:6.

the spiritual eye into the kingdom of the Holy Ghost, the Christ Consciousness, and the Cosmic Consciousness of God the Father.

The life and consciousness of an ordinary person is so tied to the sensibilities and attachments of the flesh that he cannot begin to ascend from the delusion of the body until he falls asleep or until death removes that body cage. Entering the subconscious state that underlies the outer waking consciousness, every night man partially ascends from bodily identification, but not enough. He reaches the borderland touching superconsciousness in deep dreamless sleep, but upon awakening goes back into the body tomb again. In death one ascends a little farther; but as in sleep, this release from the sepulchre of the body is involuntary and temporary. One must incarnate again and again until he has finished his fascination with the desires and attachments of physical existence. Why not learn to transcend body identification consciously and permanently? In the science of yoga, God-union—specifically, the technique of *Kriya Yoga,* the precise application of that science—India's masters have given the key to resurrection, the key to the kingdom of God.

An adept of *Kriya Yoga* conquers death by taking the soul beyond identification with the physical body, consciously and at will; and then returning to the consciousness of the mortal form again. By this process, he experiences the body as merely the material dwelling place of the soul. He can remain therein as long as he wants; and after that body has fulfilled its usefulness, he can quit it at will without suffering physical pain or mental pain due to attachment, and enter his omnipresent home in God.

Saint Paul said, "I protest by our rejoicing which I have in Christ…I die daily."* *Kriya Yoga,* or a similar technique, was known by Saint Paul; through this science of ascension, he was able to withdraw his life force and consciousness from the body into the bliss ("rejoicing") of Christ Consciousness. In transcendent meditation he could experience daily the state of conscious death when the soul does away with body consciousness and its physical and mental restlessness and activity, and the breath and heartbeat slow down to almost nothing or cease altogether. After mastering the breathless superconscious state, the soul can ascend through the spine, make contact with the Christ Consciousness, and return again to the body—switching the life force on and off at will from external bodily senses and activity. That devotee who thus practises transcending the consciousness of the body by daily meditation will

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*I Corinthians 15:31.

say with Saint Paul, "I die daily"—"I am resurrected daily." He will certainly retain his consciousness when death comes upon him and he ascends from the body into the heavenly joy of the after-death state.

Everyone eventually has to ascend, to free the soul into the divine kingdom of higher consciousness after death, and thence into its origin in the Infinity of Spirit. There is only one escape and that is to commune with God. This requires not only conscientious continuity in practising the esoteric meditation methods of transcendence, but also application of the equally essential Christlike principles of moral and spiritual behaviour, which provide the substructure enhancing, supporting, and making firm the devotee's gains in meditation. The foundational steps of the yoga science enumerated as *yama* and *niyama* by Patanjali in his *Yoga Sutras,* and the soul qualities of the devotee advancing in God-realization set forth by Sri Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita,* merge in harmonious illumination of the way of Christ perfection taught by Jesus in his Sermon on the Mount and other discourses. These emissaries of God speak with a united voice that the way to ascension is to love all, forgetting oneself in selfless service and upliftment of others; to disengage oneself from attachments to the senses, to possessions, and to the emotions that keep one body- and ego-bound (anger, fear, lust, greed); and to love God supremely and meditate so deeply that one can at will enter the ecstasy of superconsciousness—the portal to the final states of ascension in Christ (*Kutastha Chaitanya*) and Cosmic Consciousness (*Sat-Chit-Ananda*).

Practise the edicts of the great ones; do not insult their offering of the gift of liberation by merely mouthing what they have said. It is by Christlike behaviour, and by constancy in deep meditation, that the aspiring devotee can go beyond the physical self, the astral self, and the shell of consciousness with which the soul is burdened, and find blissful resurrection in Spirit.

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* "Fearlessness, purity of heart, perseverance in acquiring wisdom and in practising yoga, charity, subjugation of the senses, performance of holy rites, study of the scriptures, self-discipline, straightforwardness; noninjury, truthfulness, freedom from wrath, renunciation, peacefulness, nonslanderousness, compassion for all creatures, absence of greed, gentleness, modesty, lack of restlessness; radiance of character, forgiveness, patience, cleanness, freedom from hate, absence of conceit—these qualities are the wealth of a divinely inclined person" (*God Talks With Arjuna: The Bhagavad Gita* XVI:1–3).

Patanjali's *yama* and *niyama,* found in *Yoga Sutras* II:30, 32, consist of noninjury, truthfulness, nonstealing, control of sex force, noncovetousness, purity of body and mind, contentment in all circumstances, self-discipline, self-study (contemplation), and devotion to God.

After these things Jesus shewed himself again to the disciples at the sea of Tiberias; and on this wise shewed he himself. There were together Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee, and two other of his disciples. Simon Peter saith unto them, "I go afishing." They say unto him, "We also go with thee." They went forth, and entered into a ship immediately; and that night they caught nothing. But when the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore: but the disciples knew not that it was Jesus.

Then Jesus saith unto them, "Children, have ye any meat?" They answered him, "No."

And he said unto them, "Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find." They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes.

Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved saith unto Peter, "It is the Lord." Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he girt his fisher's coat unto him, (for he was naked,) and did cast himself into the sea.

And the other disciples came in a little ship; (for they were not far from land, but as it were two hundred cubits,) dragging the net with fishes. As soon then as they were come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon, and bread.

Jesus saith unto them, "Bring of the fish which ye have now caught."

Simon Peter went up, and drew the net to land full of great fishes, an hundred and fifty and three: and for all there were so many, yet was not the net broken.

Jesus saith unto them, "Come and dine." And none of the disciples durst ask him, "Who art thou?" knowing that it was the Lord.

Jesus then cometh, and taketh bread, and giveth them, and fish likewise. This is now the third time that Jesus shewed himself to his disciples, after that he was risen from the dead.

So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?"

He saith unto him, "Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee."

He saith unto him, "Feed my lambs."

He saith to him again the second time, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?"

He saith unto him, "Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee."

He saith unto him, "Feed my sheep."

He saith unto him the third time, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?"

Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, "Lovest thou me?" And he said unto him, "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee."

Jesus saith unto him, "Feed my sheep. Verily, verily, I say unto thee, when thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not." This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, "Follow me."

Then Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved following; which also leaned on his breast at supper and said, "Lord, which is he that betrayeth thee?" Peter seeing him saith to Jesus, "Lord, and what shall this man do?"

Jesus saith unto him, "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou me."

Then went this saying abroad among the brethren, that that disciple should not die: yet Jesus said not unto him, "He shall not die"; but, "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?"

This is the disciple which testifieth of these things, and wrote these things: and we know that his testimony is true. And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen.

—John 21:1–25

[Jesus' final words to the disciples, and his ascension into heaven, as recorded in Matthew and Mark:]

Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them. And when they saw him, they worshipped him: but some doubted.

And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." Amen.

—Matthew 28:16–20

And he said unto them, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. And these signs shall follow them that believe; in my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover."

So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God. And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen.

—Mark 16:15–20

Jesus' final instructions to and blessings on his disciples, and his dematerialisation into Spirit

The immanent-transcendent consciousness of the resurrected Jesus was purely of God though inhabiting a body visible on earth. At one with the Infinite Dreamer of the cosmic dream-drama, he could superimpose his presence into the projected dream scenes being enacted on the screen of shared experiences of his disciples' consciousness —the ship, the water, the abundant haul of fish he drew into the net, were to him all made of dream consciousness which he could manipulate at will to interact again with his disciples in his earthly form. He was the same, yet enigmatically not the same, for which reason the perplexed disciples "knew not that it was Jesus" until he repeated the miracle of their first meeting of filling their empty nets with fishes. Even then, when he beckoned them to dine with him, the highly refined Spirit vibrations of his resurrected form gave them pause so that "none of the disciples durst ask him 'Who art thou?' knowing that it was the Lord."

After dining, Jesus turned to unfinished business with Peter. On the night before his crucifixion, Jesus had prophesied that Peter, succumbing to karmic inner weakness and the temptation of delusion, would three times deny his association with Jesus: "But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." In a final confirmation of that intercessory blessing, in this poignant scene on the shore of the sea of Galilee (Tiberias), three times Jesus asked Peter to reaffirm his love for his master, and his dedication to shoulder the mission of the Good Shepherd of souls: "Feed my sheep." And with his disciple's positive response, three times Jesus reinforced Peter's faith that would sustain him when his hour of persecution would come.

The words of Jesus to Peter: "When thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not," foretold the martyrdom of Peter. But of John he said that he "will tarry till I come." John had a unique contribution to make in the mission of Jesus. The storied account of the fate of the Apostles relates that while most of them were martyred, John miraculously survived his persecutors and eventually retired to the isle of Patmos, where he lived to a very old age. There he wrote in vivid imagery The Book of Revelation, his own personal realization of the esoteric teachings of Jesus that, when its metaphor is deciphered, is in full accord with the ancient yoga science of meditation and God-realization.

According to the Gospels of Saints Matthew and Mark, Jesus emphasized in his last instructions to the Apostles their part in his ongoing work of salvation: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." And: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." That is, any person, of any race or nationality who "believeth" (knows through his own Self-realization) and who receives the spiritual baptism of immersion in the Holy Ghost Cosmic Vibration, the great Comforter or *Aum,* which uplifts the soul to Christ Consciousness ("the Son") and Cosmic Consciousness ("the Father") "shall be saved." Those who cling to ignorance and thereby shut out the redeeming power condemn themselves to remain in the "hell" of the sufferings inherent in material consciousness.

Jesus further declares that those who observe the holy precepts of eternal truth, as he has commanded, will be in tune with the Infinite Christ and therein find him ever with them, "even unto the end of the world." In his oneness with the Christ Intelligence eternally omnipresent in creation, Jesus' guidance and protection would continue to shelter those disciples who kept in tune, as long as the manifested cosmos endures.

Jesus also promised that those who would have communion with Christ Consciousness through the Holy Ghost Cosmic Vibration, "in my name," would have healing power to cast out devils of satanic delusion and disease from themselves and others. "They shall take up serpents" means that by remaining "in my name," in the Christ-imbued Holy Vibration of *Aum,* they would find their own ultimate ascension by uplifting the subtle *kundalini* "serpent force" through the awakened astral centres of the spine and brain to attain God-consciousness. Whosoever realizes his unity with Spirit can demonstrate immunity to "any deadly thing," manipulating its harmful vibration into one of benign neutrality.

Jesus then fulfilled a prophecy made earlier to his disciples: "Ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before."* Having delivered his final discourse, he "was received up into heaven," dissolving his body ("Son of man") into the ineffable, all-pervading Christ Consciousness "on the right hand of God"—the principal working Intelligence, the reflected Intelligence of the Father in manifested creation.

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* John 6:62 (see Discourse 43).

"And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written." Thus does the beloved disciple John end his Gospel. Reading these words, I smile in sympathetic understanding born of my own attempts to chronicle the deeds of Christlike masters. As I wrote in my autobiography, "In recording the lives of Babaji, Lahiri Mahasaya, and Sri Yukteswar, I have thought it advisable to omit certain miraculous stories. I could hardly have included them without writing, also, an explanatory volume of abstruse philosophy." In this commentary on the New Testament, and especially in my interpretation of the yoga science in the Bhagavad Gita, I have sought not only to provide a more complete view of the metaphysical laws operative in the miracles performed by these Yogi-Christs, but especially to elucidate the esoteric principles and techniques of salvation taught to their disciples—which in the Gospels and in the Gita were only hinted at or presented in recondite scriptural metaphor. Saint John's own mastery of that deeper science, evident in his highly symbolic Book of Revelation, was doubtless part of what he was referring to in the closing sentence of his Gospel.

Truly speaking, the Bible does not exhaust Christianity nor do India's scriptures exhaust the totality of Hinduism's *Sanatana Dharma*. The essence of religion cannot be codified in hoary books; it lives in self-sacrificing known and unknown men and women, and in soul-intoxicated saints. The brand of a particular faith is put on man by birth, geography, or dogma, and if one or more of these determines a person's religion he has very little to boast about. An imposed myopic perspective disdains as heathenism the use of any different form of prayer or worship or terminology than one's own in approaching the Deity. Heathenism, rather, lies in the absence of expression of soul qualities, no matter one's faith.

The universality of the message that Christ wanted his disciples to preach worldwide

If man would feast his mind fully on the soul qualities, the goodness in his fellow beings, there would be no appetite left for indigestible differences. This appreciation is the foundation of tolerance, which underlies the recognition of the brotherhood of man under the one Father-Mother-Friend Beloved God. This is Christ's teaching. This is the universal spiritual undertone of Jesus' command to his apostles, "Go and preach my message to the whole world." Whether his message is rudimentally understood as a way to salvation based on a spiritual morality

and love for God and one another, or comprehended in its highest intent as extolling the science of soul ascension, it is inclusive of the expression of soul qualities fostered in all good customs, traditions, and faiths.

All prophets who sang truth through their lives, in the different ages, were fountains of the One Divine Source. It was God who spoke through the Vedas and Upanishads, the Bible and the Koran, the Dhammapada, Talmud, and Grantha Sahib. Whenever darkness has ravaged the earth, those that groped in it sent forth muffled cries. This anguish of millions of benighted souls silently passed through the ether of human consciousness. Divine souls, those who have dispelled from within themselves the darkness of delusion and have become transparent channels as sons of God, arise at Divine Command from the womb of time to render help and redeem souls entombed in the sepulchre of ignorance.

The message of some prophets addresses the needs of a particular culture and age; but those emissaries who are commissioned with a God-given world mission deliver universal truths that resonate throughout all ages in timeless relevancy. Such was the spoken and lived message of Jesus, as also the ageless yoga science immortalized in scripture in its citation by Bhagavan Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita, opening the door to soul liberation since ancient times.

Liberated souls such as Jesus, whose mission continues beyond their incarnation, are able to materialise their bodies at will anywhere in the astral heavens or in the physical world at any time—today or unto thousands of years after their ascension. That is why Jesus could say in truth to his disciples: "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." He immortalized his body as well as his spirit. Any true devotee can see him as Jesus Christ or know him as one with the Infinite Christ. Saint Francis, born centuries after Jesus, used to see him every night in Assisi. Saint Teresa of Avila knew him both in form and as the Formless Christ. Numerous divinely attuned souls have seen him. He has come to me many, many times—whenever I so desire, he appears to me, with his wondrous eyes in which universes revolve, emanating the love of God omnipresent in the Christ Consciousness. Any devotee whose concentration is very deep and whose devotion is pure and persistent can see him by peering through the omniscient spiritual eye at the Christ Consciousness centre in the forehead. Intensity and perseverance are necessary; most devotees pray a little while, but soon get discouraged and give up. To such lukewarm effort,

"Lo, I am with you alway": perceiving Jesus in form and as the infinite formless Christ

Jesus will not respond. Even so, he is listening to every prayer, waiting for the devotee to become receptive and consciously welcome his presence.

It is not a matter of visualizing him or attempting to produce the form of Christ through imagination. That will result in an image being projected by the subconscious mind, just as figures are created in nightly dreams—and it will not be the Christ. Rather, one must pray without ceasing, as Jesus taught. By the practice of *Kriya Yoga*, taking the consciousness into the kingdom of God within, and then praying again and again for Christ's appearance, the devotee can behold the real Christ right in front of him. At first it will be in a vision perceptible to the sense of sight. When the vision can be seen with open as well as with closed eyes, then by even higher development in the intensity of devotion and concentration, the presence of Christ will manifest as a materialised form. That is the ultimate vision, in which one can touch the body of Jesus and talk with him, just as truly as when he walked the earth. The intimately real sensation of touching the materialised form is not the same as contact with the gross matter of an incarnate form, but the realization of the true essence of the body as a combination of spiritually magnetic vibrations informed from the Cosmic Bliss ideations of God, imparting a wondrous elevating thrill of joy and blessing.

Jesus was born in a human body; he was crucified; and he resurrected himself. He rebuilt his body, and his soul entered that resurrected form. But he did not re-create a body to remain confined in it. Though he appeared in physical form to his disciples many times after crucifixion, he dissolved that body again. To understand him only as incarnate in a body that was crucified and then resurrected is not appreciably to understand Christ as he is. Incarnate or after resurrection, Jesus was not only a physical personality, but a vessel of the infinite Christ Consciousness. While he resurrected himself in the body, he resurrected his spirit from the confinement of form into omnipresent Spirit. In oneness with the Infinite Christ, he is resurrected in every newborn body, and in you and me, and in all people of the earth, and in everything that has life. He is resurrected in the winking stars, in the planets, and in the cosmic blue. He is resurrected in all things that grow from the earth—in the grass and in the tenderest rose. He feels his resurrection in every form that exists. He is risen in every atom and cell of the capacious cosmos.*

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* "Jesus said: 'I am the light that is over all things. I am all: from me all came forth, and to me all attained. Split a piece of wood; I am there. Lift up the stone, and you will find me there'" (Gospel of Thomas, verse 77).

In the Bhagavad Gita (XIII:13–17), Lord Krishna, from his own oneness with God's Universal Consciousness, lauds this immanent-transcendent Omnipresence of Spirit:

> He dwells in the world, enveloping all—everywhere, His hands and feet; present on all sides, His eyes and ears, His mouths and heads;
>
> Shining in all the sense faculties, yet transcending the senses; unattached to creation, yet the Mainstay of all; free from the *gunas* (modes of Nature), yet the Enjoyer of them.
>
> He is within and without all that exists, the animate and the inanimate; near He is, and far; imperceptible because of His subtlety.
>
> He, the Indivisible One, appears as countless beings; He maintains and destroys those forms, then creates them anew.
>
> The Light of All Lights, beyond darkness; Knowledge itself, That which is to be known, the Goal of all learning, He is seated in the hearts of all.

This is how Jesus wants his devotees to know him: not to limit him to a form, but to understand his resurrection in omnipresence, to perceive him as one with the Infinite Light of Christ Consciousness. Through the spiritual eye, the worshipper can behold not only the Christ with form, but the formless Christ felt in the vastness of inner perception, because Christ is already present at that divine centre of consciousness in all human beings. To experience Christ as the Cosmic Intelligence is far more wonderful than just seeing an image informed out of that Infinite Christ. That is the transcendental Christ which is the "only begotten Son," the only begotten reflection of the Heavenly Father's Cosmic Consciousness in all creation.

"Behold, he cometh with clouds (he shall come out of the clouds of ignorance) and every eye (spiritual eye) shall see him" (Revelation 1:7). It is the Spirit behind the body of Christ with which one should strive to be united—to rise from the tomb of ignorance and realize in the ascension of the soul the resurrection of the Christ within.

ADDENDA

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Inspirational Readings for the True Worship of Christ

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Part II, Easter

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General Index

Inspirational Readings for the True Worship of Christ

Selections from the talks, devotional meditation services, and writings of Paramahansa Yogananda in commemoration of Christmas and Easter. A number of other inspirations from these holy seasons are to be found in his multi-volume Collected Talks and Essays *published by Yogoda Satsanga Society of India. In addition, several such selections are available from Yogoda Satsanga Society of India on rare archival recordings in Paramahansaji's own voice.*

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Part I

A Christmas Message

Celebrating Christmas in the Consciousness of Christ

[A description of the first all-day Christmas meditation service held at Self-Realization Fellowship International Headquarters]

When Christmas comes, people usually think of buying gifts for their loved ones. A few think of the beauties of Christmas music and church services. Most celebrators revel in the festivity of the Christmas tree, with its glimmering electric "stars" and tinsel and the gaily wrapped gifts beneath its branches. It is good to celebrate the birth of Christ with songs, dinners, and the exchange of gifts; but if material festivity becomes the only purpose of all the Christmas celebration, it is a pity, and nothing of spiritual value is gained.

Let us learn how to make our celebration of Christmas a real commemoration of the holy life of Christ, a truly spiritual and uplifting experience. Once I saw a shotgun adorning a Christmas tree, and I remarked to my hostess: "Madam, that gift for your son is an insult to the Christ who preached 'Thou shalt not kill.' A gun means death, murder, revenge, brother fighting brother. For that reason it is out of place in the celebration of the birthday of the 'Prince of Peace.'" The lady took the gun away, and placed there instead a beautiful edition of a children's Bible. On Christmas Day we should exchange not only useful gifts, but God-reminding gifts as well.

The original meaning of religious symbols and holy days is often forgotten. Thus, most people think of Christmas as an ordinary holiday festivity and forget Christ, the master of ceremonies. When used only as an occasion for festivity, the great spiritual significance of Christmas is lost sight of. As in a motion-picture show, the principal attention of the audience is on the story and not on the music, so in Christmas enter-

tainment, the principal attention is on the material celebration, and Christ, though a most necessary part, is pushed into the background.

We should rejoice that such a holy being as Christ was given to serve as an ideal of perfection for deluded mankind to follow. Indifferent, unconscious honour shown to him will not do us any good. Christmas should be so observed that it may materially, mentally, and spiritually give us, at the least, a new impetus to start in the Christ-path of truth with the beginning of the new year.

We did this last year [1931] at the Self-Realization Fellowship Mother Center. A short description of the way we observed Christmas will give some suggestions as to how spiritual people should celebrate the coming Christmas.

To begin with, we did our Christmas shopping early. Every resident, and all others invited to the Christmas festivity, received a gift. However small in monetary value, it was rich with our love. Everyone in our divine family is considered close to us because of a spiritual tie, which is even stronger than a material tie of compulsion. We are gathered together in the name of our One Father, and have recognised ourselves as His children made in His image.

We knew that getting dinner for a hundred people, adorning the Christmas tree, and making all the arrangements, would take much time, and that in the din of activity Christ might slip away unnoticed from the altar of our attention. So the day before Christmas we fasted on fruits and suspended all cooking and other preparations for Christmas Day. We sat around the exquisitely decorated Christmas tree and alternately chanted and meditated deeply, from 8 a.m. until 4 p.m. We ate a supper of fruit and meditated again until 11 p.m. As we retired, many guests, with tears in their eyes, said: "We have felt Christ and God today. We never knew before what the deep diving into Cosmic Consciousness meant. Most of us swam on the surface of the sea of silence, but never dived to get the beautiful pearls of God-contact."

Christmas morning we began with a meditation, and then the final preparations were completed and the long-looked-for dinner came. After that was the opening of the mystery packages, then a closing meditation and singing until late at night. So it was that our Christmas began in the consciousness of Christ and ended in his Expanded Consciousness.

With the coming of Christmas, do not let your consciousness sink into the well of turkey dinners, exchange of gifts, dances, festivities,

and cocktail parties. A well of material thoughts is not a fit place in which to celebrate Christ's birthday. Instead, take your consciousness from the confines of mere material festivities and with closed eyes enter the secret door of meditative silence to behold the vast altar of peace spread eternally above, beneath, to the left and to the right, in front and behind, within and without.

If you go deeper, you will meet Christ coming to you in his flaming robes of bliss, like the rising aurora, and your joy will dance in every atom of space. Then open your eyes, behold your little body, and say: "The Christ-Bliss is descending on the altar of my thought, feeling, and devotion." Meditate upon the affirmation: "Christ-Peace is descending into every tissue and cell of my body as health."

Place Christ on the altar of your business and possessions. Say: "I possess these things in Christ." Then meditate on the affirmation: "My Christ-Peace has descended upon every member of my family, upon my country, and upon my world." Behold Christ-Peace descending upon your body, your possessions, and extending to your neighbours, to all countries, and onto the united altar of all hearts and all creatures. Let Christ-Bliss extend from your body to all lands, to North America, South America, Asia, Europe, Australia, every continent and island; to the solar system, to the island universes, and to all beings. Meditate upon the following: "My Christ-Peace is descending upon every living thing, upon every living star, upon every speck of matter and space."

Celebrate Christmas upon the altar of the vast inner silence; in the sanctuary of every desire, every living thing in the world, in all the cosmos, celebrate the birth of Christ. Then will you know Christ as the Divine King ruling in the heart of all finite creation.

A Cradle for the Christ of Everywhere

During this coming Christmas season, open a new portal of sublime devotion so that the Christ Omnipresence will be able to come anew within your consciousness. Every day, every hour, every golden second, Christ has been knocking at your dark gates of ignorance. Now, in this august sacred dawn, Christ is especially coming in answer to your inner call, to awaken his Christ Consciousness Omnipresence within you.

Weave a cradle of tender perceptions with the threads of your meditation and make it commodious enough to hold the baby Infinity within its welcoming vastness. Christ is born in the viridescent blades; His gentleness is cradled in all fragrances. The opalescent sea-decked globe, the star-spangled savanna of the blue, the crimsoned love of the self-sacrificing martyrs and saints, have vied with each other in offering a dwelling place for the all-pervading baby Christ.

This Christ of Everywhere is sleeping in the breast of Eternity; He loves to take new birth at any time, anywhere, especially in the warmth of your true affection. Though the Infinite Christ is present in every speck of space as the splendour of ever new wisdom and creative expression, you can never see Him unless He chooses to be seen in the cradle of your unceasing devotion.

The cozy crib of your heart has for a very long time been small, holding self-love alone; now you must make it enormous, so that social, national, international, creatural, and Cosmic Christ–love may be born there and become One Love.

Christmas should be celebrated not only by appropriate festivities and the exchange of material gifts, but also by deep, continuous meditation, making your consciousness a cosmic cathedral for Christ. You should offer therein your most precious gifts of love, goodwill, and service to uplift your inimical brothers, as well as your friendly brothers—physically, mentally, and spiritually.

The Infinite Christ is everywhere; worship His nativity in Hindu, Buddhist, Christian, Moslem, Jewish, and other true religious temples. Every expression of Truth flows from the All-pervading Christ perception, so learn to worship that sacred Universal Intelligence in every

pure religion, belief, and teaching. Since the Cosmic Christ dreamed into existence the divine being that is man, you should celebrate the birth of Christ in your newly awakened equal love for every nationality and race.

All new-blown blossoms and astral twinklings are images of the Infinite Christ; garland each one with your love. Behold in your love the birth of an intoxicating Christ-love for your parents, friends, relatives, neighbours, and all races. In the sanctuary of your soul, invite your restless thoughts to assemble and still themselves in a service of deepest united love for Christ.

When the Christmas packages are placed around the family tree, make every thought an altar of Christ, and saturate the gifts with your goodwill. Worship Christ as born in all creation: in the star, in the leaf, in the blossom, in the nightingale, in the nosegay, and in your velvet devotion. Unite your heart with all hearts, so that Christ may be born there and remain forever and forever.

A Christmas Message

When Will You Know That Christ Is With You?

Jesus was born in the cradle of Christ Consciousness twenty centuries ago. His universal Christ Consciousness is reborn in every wise man. Are you ready in the coming Christmas to expand your soul to behold within yourself the birth of the Omnipresent Christ?

To observe the birthday of Jesus with gifts and festivities shows some respect and attention to the ideals of his life. But to meditate and prepare your mind for the holy occasion of Christmas, that you may experience within yourself the birth of a new consciousness of universal brotherhood and love for all living creatures, is to really celebrate Christmas. Drive away from your mind all pride and prejudices, that you may fittingly hold the omnipresent Christ Consciousness in your love-expanded bosom.

If at Christmas you find your strong will unconquered by the tests of temptations, know that Christ is born within you in reality.

If in the coming Christmas you can maintain inner peace when crucified with disquietude, know that Christ is with you.

If at Christmas you can meditate with deep joy in spite of the restless horde of invading thoughts, know that Christ as the divine joy of meditation has manifested within you.

When you cannot be roused to wrath by crucifixion through others' wickedness, know that you are ready for Christ. When you feel love for all in spite of any hatred toward you, know that an altar for Christ is created within you.

When all the time you can feel within you the ecstasy of unbroken joy of meditation, know that Christ is with you evermore, and that within your deathless consciousness you will celebrate the true Christmas experience every moment, every minute, every day, every year, unto eternity.

The Resurrection

"The Lord is risen indeed."

—Luke 24:34

The whole drama of Jesus' life was a testament to the supremacy of man's spirit over matter. He had willingly incarnated in a human form, partaking of its inherent limitations, to show matter-bound souls the way to conquer every form of delusion imposed on them by the overreaching power of Cosmic Satan. Jesus' resurrection demonstrated the consummation of that victory: "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death."

—Paramahansa Yogananda

Drawing by Heinrich Hofmann

Realizing the Christ Presence

Do not think of Christ in the manger at Bethlehem as a helpless little baby; for even as the tiny infant Jesus, within his consciousness was omnipresent God. How else could he, when only a young boy, talk in a manner that startled even the wise men of the temple? While he had a little-boy brain, behind it and manifesting through it was the almighty spirit of God. The universal spirit of Christ Consciousness was with him from the beginning.

That is the real reason why we should celebrate his birthday—to remind ourselves of the divine qualities of Jesus, and to awaken ourselves to a realization of the enlightening, loving Christ Presence in our own consciousness. It is a pity that so many people forget entirely the real purpose of the Christmas celebration and lose themselves in the material side only of the joyous festivities.

Christ has been unknown to you because you have kept the gates of your devotion closed. Take this Christmas celebration seriously and through deep and sustained meditation invite the Christ to manifest himself to you. His beloved disciple Saint John said: "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God." Then why not make yourself ready to receive him now? It is easier at this season than at any other time, for a spirit of goodwill, love, and peace radiates throughout the world. The entire cosmos celebrates this season of joy for the Light that permeates all space.

Remember what Jesus was in reality. But he came on earth as a human being and went through all the struggles and suffering of a human being and came through victoriously. That is why he can be an example for us, an ideal toward which we may strive. If he could succeed, we may also.

We must live life unselfishly as he lived it and must faithfully practise the method of interiorization for realizing the presence of that Almighty Grace within—the method of persistent meditation. Christ must come in that cathedral of inner silence. Go so deep within the great silence that you feel the one Life that pervades all creation. Then you will find the Christ Presence.

Christ is born in the cradle of each loving heart. So you must pre-

pare your consciousness to receive him. Instead of enjoying just the material aspects of this Christmas celebration, make your heart a cradle where Christ can be born again.

Be sure that love and goodwill accompany the gifts you give, and recognise the spirit and the hand of the Father in those you receive. Give extra time to meditation for at least the week preceding Christmas, devoting several hours to divine communion on one of those days; and be sure to meditate on Christmas morning. Accept this great gift of the life of Jesus, which the Father meant for you. Do not let Jesus' living and his suffering be in vain. He came to bring you joy, and glory, and peace, and light. These he offers to you always, but with especial tenderness and love at this holy season. Wake up and accept the Christ-gifts of life.

Christ is the joy felt in meditation. Christ is the perception realized in the deepest hours of silence. Clear away all the bars of material desire and let Christ into your heart. Open the portals of devotion and meditate until the Christ child is born within you.

May you have a very merry Christmas, and may you receive the greatest gift that anyone can wish for you—the perception of the Christ spirit in your own heart. May you feel his presence on Christmas Day and every day throughout the new year. Open your hearts to receive the wonderful gift of Light. Meditate. Meditate until you get results. The answer is sure if you persist. Love, serve, meditate.

Come to the Land Where Christ Reigns

[An inspirational talk given during one of the all-day Christmas meditations conducted by Paramahansaji at Self-Realization Fellowship International Headquarters — one day prior to the festive social celebrations on Christmas Day.]

Today we celebrate Christ in Spirit; tomorrow we celebrate the coming of Christ in the body of Jesus. We shall prepare our minds and consciousness that in true understanding we may observe Christmas as the birth of Christ in the cradle of our souls and in all mental and physical expressions of our lives.

Thousands around the world are celebrating Christmas; for most it is primarily a time for festivities and the exchange of presents. But Christmas is far more than a holiday celebration for the masses. For me, Christmas has a greater meaning: the consciousness of the significance of Christ—an individualistic consciousness wherein I find Christ as the Universal Spirit manifesting in my own consciousness. That is what is most important—to bring the actual realization of Christ into our observance of Christmas.

When a great personality has come on earth, it is customary for a special day to be set aside to honour that figure, often in a social or material way. If this is the only manner in which one observes the birth of Christ, I think it is an insult to him, and is not a proper celebration. I have often said that Christ was crucified at the hands of ignorant people not only once, but that he is being crucified all the time by those who do not know the true meaning of the life and teachings of Christ. Ignorant people desecrate their souls by nonunderstanding and their own misguided actions.

Of course, homage paid to Christ in whatever manner always does some good. Christmas festivity evokes the sentiment of the peace of this divine soul who came into the world to serve as a beacon of light to guide stray hearts. There is also the spirit of joy that abounds in traditional Christmas observances. Perfect joy, joy that is connected with purity, is the joy of God. Those who celebrate even from the material standpoint will experience something of this joy. They will find, at least

for a time, a certain sense of freedom from their cares and sorrows, and from some of the inimical and evil thoughts that have tainted the feeling in their hearts. And there is an essence of love in the elements of sacrifice and friendship experienced in the giving of gifts. Love, the divine love of God, is the most inspiring truth that Jesus demonstrated; it was the power by which he could return love and forgiveness for the hatred he received. To express hate for hate is easy and basely human, but to love in the face of enmity and unkindness is greatness. Love is the stronger weapon; it can destroy hatred. The remembrance of the exemplary divine goodness of Jesus that was manifested in all he did, the thought of the Divine Love he gave, and that in that Love he lived and died to uplift the world—that is the spirit predominant at Christmastime. All this is what Christmas stands for.

I give you this talk that you may know the purpose of this our Christmas meditation day. It is the preparation to receive the Baby Christ on the altar of our awakened spiritual consciousness. But the Baby needs a cradle. His presence is spread over all the stars and universes—omnipresent, in everything. But he loves the cradle of hearts, the cradle of our own divine consciousness. And so, we prepare that cradle for him today.

Prepare for Christ the cradle of your consciousness

The divine way Christ in the form of Jesus came on earth, the way he was tested to bring mankind a new Light, a new Glory—showing that by attunement with the Invisible Light that leads to God the human heart may be freed of all despair and mortal darkness—that is what we should remember today as we make ready the inner cradle of consciousness to receive and hold him.

You must plunge deeper and deeper into the spirit of meditation, to where the mind crosses the entrenchments of bad habits of physical and mental restlessness and arrives at the sanctuary of peace and bliss. The deeper the meditation, the easier it becomes to perceive Christ. Those who are intimidated by the effort required, and hence give up, never get beyond the obstacles of the body and mind. The greatest victory to be achieved is over our own selves; it lies in the conquering of our mental deficiencies and wrong habits. I want you to go with me to the land beyond, where Christ reigns. It is very easy for me. Every day is a Christmas, for I revel in the glory of the Lord, and I find that the Baby Christ as Christ Consciousness is cradled always in my own consciousness. I want you to have that realization.

What is Christ Consciousness? Christ is God's Infinite Intelligence that is present in all creation. The Infinite Christ is the "only begotten son" of God the Father, the only pure Reflection of Spirit in the created realm. That Universal Intelligence, the *Kutastha Chaitanya* or Krishna Consciousness of the Hindu scriptures, was fully manifested in the incarnation of Jesus, Krishna, and other divine ones; and it can be manifested also in your consciousness. You, too, are a child of God. That same consciousness can be yours. That is what you must always remember. I give you the testimony of Saint John, who spoke of receiving that divine consciousness which was in Jesus: "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God."

So it is true that Christ is the only begotten son of God—not the body, but the Christ Consciousness that was in Jesus.

I have seen Christ Jesus as he lived on earth. But greater than the body is the consciousness of Christ, which is one with God or Cosmic Consciousness. Christ remains unknown to those who know him solely as a body. He is known truly only to those who perceive him as Spirit.

The divine power of Christ realization is an internal experience; it may be received through unalloyed devotion for God and for His pure reflection as Christ. The power of church and temple will vanish. Real spirituality shall come from the temples of great souls who are day and night in the ecstasy of God. Such souls as I have seen in India surpass the glory of all the temples. Remember, Christ seeks the temples of true souls. He loves the quiet shrine of devotion in your heart where you abide with him, there in the sanctuary aglow with the vigil light of your love. Those who meditate devoutly will receive Christ on the altar of calmness in their own consciousness.

The star of the East that led the Three Wise Men to Christ was no physical star, but rather a spiritual star. It would be impossible for such a planetary body to suddenly appear and remain so close to the earth without a collision.

The star of the East that leads to Christ

Absence of the visible material light is darkness. But behind material darkness is the spiritual light, which is everywhere. When you pierce the darkness of closed physical eyes, you behold the light of the spiritual eye—the intuitive, all-seeing eye of the soul. Through that spiritual eye you can enter the sphere of awakened silence. It is there, behind the clouds of darkness, that you perceive Christ. Today we will prepare our minds by medi-

tation until our entire consciousness passes through that telescopic eye and beholds the overspreading divine consciousness of the Infinite Christ.

Just imagine! If you were living in this one room all of your life, having no contact with or knowledge of what is beyond these walls, you would say that this is the whole of your world. But if someone were to take you into the world outside, you would realize how infinitesimal your "world" was. So it is with the perception of Christ Consciousness. The scope of mortal consciousness by comparison is like observing only the area of a tiny mustard seed to the exclusion of the rest of the cosmos. Christ Consciousness is Omnipresence, the Lord spread over every pore of infinite space and permeating every atom. When in deep meditation we peer through the spiritual eye, we behold God's creation-evolving spiritual light afloat in the vast sphere of our awakening in Christ.

Let us today prepare our consciousness to celebrate spiritually the birth of Christ. Let Christ, who is the only pure reflection in creation of the Consciousness of God the Father, enter into our consciousness.

A vision of Christ

All those who have attained Christhood can retain the physical likenesses of their incarnations on earth, and they can manifest those forms to their true devotees. If you are not able to see Jesus when you pray to him, it is because you do not really try. If you want to perceive Christ, the way is through intensity and perseverance in meditation. Sacrifice sleep, discipline the body, control the mind; burn the darkness of closed eyes with your meditation. Then you will have Christ with you. As God is true, your prayer will be answered if you make the right effort.

Many times I have seen Christ manifested in form. Once in Boston, during a very busy period, I suddenly felt that for three days I had forgotten God. I was wholly engaged in His work, forgoing sleep and everything. So it seemed that by lack of meditation I had left God out. This thought was so painful to me that I packed up my belongings and said to Him: "I am going to walk out of all this activity. It is for You that I am doing all this; yet because of it, I have forgotten You!" What is the use of having a spiritual organisation if God is not there? It is just like preparing a banquet for an honoured guest and having that person absent from the table. I sat to meditate, and prayed to God: "I am going now!"

His voice replied: "No."

I argued: "But what is the use of all this if it causes me to forget You?"

The voice of God answered: "I am with you always."

I wanted from God some demonstration of that assurance: "All right, if You are with me always, I would like to see You as Krishna and Christ and all their disciples walking on a sea of gold." As I said this, that very vision unfolded before me—Krishna and Christ and their disciples walking toward me on a shimmering golden sea. My mind said: "Maybe this is a hallucination. If the person who is meditating here with me sees the vision also, then I will believe." At that moment, this person saw the same manifestation that I was perceiving. The room became filled with a wonderful fragrance that remained all day long and was perceptible to everyone who entered the room.

Such experiences are not imagination. As you progress on this path you shall see the wonders of God. Sometime during January I shall give a demonstration of the power of mind over the body. Even as a child, I used to show that power; but I gave it up because my desire was for God's love and not His miracles. I show His power only when He has given me permission to do so. My interest is in spiritual healing, more than in any other kind of healing or phenomenal demonstration. My wish is to draw those who love God. I prefer a soul to a crowd, and I love crowds of souls. Many times it seemed that my love's labour was lost, but then I would be amazed to see the development of some sincere students. This I can say: No one who comes to me with an open mind and spiritual recipiency shall go away without some perception of God.

Many lack faith in God unless they receive evidence of His powers. Faith is very important, because receptivity to divine power is shut off by negative thoughts and doubts. Faith grows as you exercise it; and when you have faith, you can do everything. If you can hold on to an idea long enough, and do not give up when opposed by contrary evidence, even if the whole world says it is impossible; if you can fight the negative thoughts of people and keep your own thoughts strong while working toward your goal, it will manifest.

Know that God is your own

When we wish for God, there is nothing we have to create or acquire. We have Him already. He is with us, buried beneath the debris of doubts and unbelief. All you have to do is *know* that God is your own. With material things, you do not own anything; you have to beg for everything you get. Why degrade yourself to the status of a beggar

when you are a child of God? Do not go on desiring too many things. Just say to the Lord: "I am having a good time participating in Your cosmic drama, and I am happy with whatever You send to me." That is living in the real spirit of Christ.

Anything you enjoy apart from God is potentially destructive to your true happiness. If the senses are connected with God they will serve you; but if they are not settled in God, they will destroy you. To remain drunk with materiality is to be tossed about like waves in a storm; but when you are safe on the Divine Shore, then you will see all waves of life as a part of the Ocean of God—the Sea of Christ Consciousness. Ordinary people are buffeted about by the winds of emotions and desires, unable to see the Infinite Ocean as the essence of their life and being. Meditation gives you a chance to realize that we are all waves of life dancing on the Sea of Christ Consciousness in God. Do not live in ignorance; do not die in delusion.

I used to pray urgently to God: "Hours are passing, days and years will go by, but I will not give up until You come to me; I want You, my Beloved, only You." He came at last, and is always with me now. Nothing can take Him away. It does not matter to me whether the world accepts or forsakes me, or whether friends support or leave me. I have God. When He is with you, He makes you fearless, secure in His love.

The best time to make love to God is at night when you are free and the world is asleep. Take your heart away from everything and give it only to God in deep meditation. I practised that. Now, no matter what I am doing, working or meditating, my mind is on God. So it must be with you. When you become drunk with God you don't lose your balance even in the midst of troubles and activities.

Never go to bed until you have made real contact with God. Then in the daytime you will be able to conquer all the temptations and destructive forces that confront you. Nobody can take your peace away from you. Nothing can take away that divine love between you and God. Be determined!

The Lord is waiting to see if perchance we use our God-given freedom to seek Him, our own Beloved. When we do, that pleases Him more than anything else. If instead we use our freedom to cast Him away, then He is filled with sorrow. When freely we give our love to Him—not because He is great and all-powerful, but because He is our own, and because we are His children, expressions of His One Consciousness—that is what He loves.

If you want to see God, who is formless, He will come as Christ Consciousness in form—as was manifested in the body of Jesus, in the body of Mahavatar Babaji, or other of the great ones.

"My first love—for Krishna—was responded to!"

I remember one evening in my boyhood years in India, a friend and I sat for meditation, and I vowed: "We will see Krishna tonight!" My desire to see him was adamant. I made up my mind that my prayer to know Krishna would be answered. Unless you have that kind of devotion and determination, what is the use of praying? Your mind will remain busy with restless thoughts. As the night wore on, my friend became restless because he didn't cross over the trenches that lie in the path of meditation. Finally he said, "Let us go to bed now." But I was in joy of expectation of the coming of Krishna. I wasn't seeing anything; yet I felt I was on the right track. Six o'clock in the morning came, and my friend again urged, "Come on, let's go to bed!" But I returned, "I shall never give up!" Just as I said that, fulfilment came. With open eyes I saw Lord Krishna! My friend couldn't see him but he felt the divine presence. When I reached out and touched my companion, he also saw what I saw. My first love—for Krishna—was responded to!

If you want to see any particular saint or avatar, you must cultivate the divine consciousness to receive that manifestation. Right here in this chapel while I was giving a sermon, Saint Francis of Assisi once came to me; and from that experience I wrote the poem, "God! God! God!"* And so I tell you, it is wonderful to live in that all-encompassing Christ Consciousness. You must realize Christ in Spirit first, and then you can see Him in form.

Yogoda Satsanga Society of India is awakening that divine consciousness in true souls. Those who will meditate and receive Christ in their consciousness, they will be the real saints.

And so on this Christmas meditation day, with adamantine heart prepare your mind. In divine perception, everything will melt into the sea of Christ Consciousness. To me, everything is One—aflame with the same one consciousness of God. Today meditate so deeply and so fervently that you feel Christ, that you know he is real, and not just a scriptural idea spread by the intellectual exultation of others. Let Christ today become a reality in your consciousness, that your life may reflect Christ to all whom you contact. Christ *is* real. He must come to you.

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* In *Songs of the Soul*, published by Yogoda Satsanga Society of India.

A Christmas Message

Let Us Rejoice

Let us make this Christmas a real celebration of the birth of the holy child by striving to realize the consciousness which he attained.

Let us make this celebration an uplifting and spiritual experience.

Let us not for a moment forget the one whose birthday is being commemorated while in our zeal we go about the joyful and exciting preparation of the happy festivities.

Let us use this occasion as a new impetus to inspirit us on the Christ-path of truth and love.

Let us use it as an opportunity to express the Universal Christ-love for all people and all creatures—exalted and lowly, near and far, large and small, known and unknown.

While we are remembering the physical birth of the baby Christ Jesus, let us realize his eternal loving presence in omnipresent Christ Consciousness, which is always with us no matter where we are or what we are doing.

Let us resolve anew to discipline ourselves—to control our bodies, our minds, and our emotions—and to strive ever toward Christ understanding.

Let us establish the Prince of Peace consciousness as our inner ruler, that we may meet our crosses and tests of life with power, victory, and tranquility.

Let us meditate until we perceive the Infinite Christ reigning in our own hearts.

Let us learn to love those who love us not; and to forgive those who do ill against us.

Let us break all our mental boundaries of colour, creed, and nationality, and receive all—even our inanimate and animal brothers—in the endless, all-embracing arms of our Christ Consciousness. This will be a true and fitting celebration of the coming of Jesus Christ to this earth.

Let us rejoice and give thanks for this wonderful gift of light and love from the Great Giver.

Peace. Joy. Peace.

How Shall We Celebrate Christmas?

For twenty centuries, the world has celebrated in various ways the birth of Christ. Many count the coming of Christmas as an occasion for family gatherings and the exchange of colourfully wrapped gifts. Young children look upon Christmas as the time when Santa Claus will give them new toys and other things they are wishing for. They hang their stockings by the fireplace, and Santa is said to slip down the sooty opening of the chimney to fill them with the longed-for articles. With what anticipation the little ones lie awake the night before, waiting for Christmas morn, till they drift off into happy dreams! The mothers and fathers delight in decorating the family Christmas tree and loading it with gaily wrapped presents.

Many who have no home and family look forward to Christmas as perhaps one time in the year when they will be invited to a special home-cooked hot dinner. The worldly minded enjoy their social rounds, and drink themselves into oblivion as their way of celebrating the birth of Christ.

To the practical-minded, Christmas has also a mercenary side. Churches count on the spirit of the season to bring bigger collections to support their work; and on the same basis merchants encourage spending in anticipation of higher profits. There is nothing wrong in using business methods to advance the spiritual work of Christ to establish his ideals in receptive souls; but it is blasphemous to use Christ and his ideals merely as a means for increasing business.

Christmas in many churches means great festivity, and is observed with music, plays, ceremonies, socials, and often extra charitable works. In special religious services the congregations fervently thank God for sending His beloved son "to redeem the sin-laden world." Those who are deeply spiritual, such as the sincere monks and nuns sequestered in their monasteries and convents, celebrate Christmas even more seriously and fervently, by meditating on Christ.

Superficial celebrators turn his hallowed day into little more than an expensive social occasion. They at least get out of Christmas a few gifts, the kindness and love behind those gifts, and some passing moments of joy. But how few receive its fullest blessings, by really

celebrating Christmas in the thought of Christ! Most people do not know how to celebrate the coming of Christ on earth: by beholding the divine Christ Consciousness, which was manifest in Jesus, born anew in the cradle of their own spiritual awakening in deep meditation.

The question is, which is right? to observe the birth of the Christ Jesus with worldly rejoicings expressed in bright decorations, festive dinners, and the exchange of gifts; or to worship him in spirit only?

Birthday celebrations are meant to make the one who is being honoured feel that his life is of value to those observing his birth anniversary. Such observances also serve to focus the attention of others on qualified souls whose lives are worthy of appreciation and emulation. Jesus does not need our celebrations to gratify and uplift him. But it is right and appropriate that we celebrate his birthday every Christmas, because his life is permanently useful and inspiring to all humanity in all ages. We certainly need to celebrate his coming in order to remind ourselves of his exemplary, abiding, uplifting life, so that perchance our deeper thought of him may encourage us to remould our lives, and to pattern them through all futurity after his divine life.

Millions are planning to celebrate this coming Christmas in their usual way, as a purely social event. Who is looking forward to using this special time for spiritually remembering Christ and for exchanging gifts of soul and heart qualities?

Will Christmas be for you just a romanticism of religious and social festivity, or will you observe the real meaning of Christmas? I urge you to celebrate truly the birth of Jesus: by realizing within yourself his universal love, forgiveness, character, renunciation, and devotion, and by feeling Christ-love for all brother races and all living creatures. Unless you make the effort this coming Christmas to get truly acquainted with the ever-living Christ—born within you as new wisdom, new happiness—I am afraid you will let yet another precious instructive season pass without heed.

I am not asking you to omit the social observances of Christmas. What I want to see is that you do not, like the millions who forget God, omit in your celebration the paramount spiritual factor. Add to your social festivities the bringing of Christ a second time—in your meditative consciousness. There is only a suggestion of Christ in Christmas festivities; but in the cradle of divine ecstasy in meditation he is seen and felt as an everlasting, ever joyous reality.

Prepare yourself to celebrate Christmas in the real way:

Make your heart an altar of Christ-love—which lives in all races and loves them equally—so that you may love all people, seeing in their body-temples the dwelling place of omnipresent Christ.

Forgive all your enemies—real and imaginary—even as Jesus forgave his adversaries. Fill your heart with compassionate understanding for those who crucify you with unkind actions, words, or ingratitude in exchange for the good you give them. Let your prayer be: "Father, teach me to love my error-stricken brethren, who know not what they do. Let me not by unkindness drive them deeper into evil, but rather let my love persuade them to better ways of living."

Govern all the actions of your life with the honesty and fearlessness of Jesus Christ.

Overcome sorrow-producing temptations by self-control, even as Jesus overcame the temptations of Satan. Develop a preference for all things good. Forego the temporary pleasures that derive from misuse of the senses, and pursue the lasting, true happiness of the soul.

Give to others good for evil, understanding for misunderstanding, kindness for unkindness. Within yourself, substitute peace for disquietude, calmness for restlessness, and lasting bliss for material pleasure.

Give the spiritual gifts of your outstanding good qualities to those who need them, and receive ennobling soul qualities from the great ones, who love you for your own good.

Remember that Christ can be born again every Christmas, or at any other time, in your meditation-awakened consciousness. Behold the omnipresent, ever-living Christ born anew in your devoted attention. Make the unknown Christ known to you by communing with him as the ever-new, ever-increasing joy of your daily deep meditation. Love Christ as this joy of meditation, and in this way celebrate every day the spiritual Christmas: his second coming, within yourself.

See the rebirth of Christ in the magnificence of all nature, in your awakened wisdom, in everything that wears true beauty, and in everyone who is saturated with the fragrance of Christ qualities.

Enjoy whatever you do at Christmas with the thought of Christ, in the peace of Christ.

Exchange gifts as offerings to the Christ in all; and on the Christmas tree of your calm consciousness, richly decorated and glistening with divine soul qualities, place for him the gift of your heart. There receive from Christ the gift of himself.

Through the portal of meditation, let your imprisoned joy escape to, and rest in, the heart of Christ, which is in everything. Let your joy dance in the farthest planets, over the vastness of the blue, and in the wavelets of souls you have met and loved, and who are nearest to you. Then you will behold Christ cradled in every manifestation of creation. You will discover the omnipresent joy of Christ in all saints, in all men, in all creatures, in the star-studded cosmos, and in the cradle of your thoughts and the temple of your soul.

A Christmas Message

Be a True Christ-One

This is my Christmas Song to you, that by daily meditation you so prepare the cradle of your consciousness that you behold the Infinite Baby Christ laid there anew. During this holy season pray deep and long until every day becomes a true Christmas occasion of divine communion.

Spiritualize the social ceremonious celebration around the Christmas tree of material gifts by exchanging with one another, and with all true souls in a spirit of universal brotherhood, spiritual gifts of soul qualities: love, peace, forgiveness, and joy.

Kindle in the fireplace of patriotism a glamorous light of love for all nations of the earth to drive away the gloom of wars and misunderstandings. As a true Christ's son, make a solemn vow within: "I will love all God's people as I love my own people."

Live Christ's unifying influence at home, in business, in the church, in society, in politics, in international understanding; and Lord Jesus will be with you. You will be a Christ-ian—a Christ-one—one with Christ.

My Christmas Message to All Nations of the Earth

[During World War II]

O Christ, the birth of thy love in the hearts of all nations was never so urgently needed as now. May thy birth as the Prince of Peace be felt in all hearts in this coming Christmas and every day.

Why are the nations of the earth casting all their resources and young lives into the flames of destruction, when they could use them to destroy disease, poverty, and ignorance and bring heavenly happiness on earth?

Though thy children nations have forgotten they are brothers, offspring of common material parents, Adam and Eve, and of the one Spiritual Heavenly Father-God and have not heeded thy warning, O Christ, that he who uses the sword must fall by the sword, still I pray that thou be manifested in their darkened hearts, showing them a quick way of recovery from the fever of war and hate. Bring them into the light of lasting peace and prosperity. Bless thy children nations that they may inwardly cooperate with the governing laws of the Universal Christ Intelligence and quickly end this war and its attendant sufferings. Make us all realize that the Christ Consciousness in which thou art is the best shelter from all harm; and teach us to be devoted to our Father like thee, O Christ.

May our prayer ever be: "In health or disease, in success or failure, in joy or sorrow, in praise or blame, in fame or crucifixion, in companionship or bereavement, in victory or defeat, in peace or war, in security or disaster, life or death, we will stand immutably, unalterably loyal, devoted and loving to Thee, our Heavenly Father, ever and forever."

A Message From the Loving Heart of Christ

Christ sends this message of Christmas inspiration, through me: "As the husband and wife sacrifice for each other, as parents sacrifice for their children, as families sacrifice for their countries, so should each country sacrifice for the United World Family of all humanity.

"Let this Christmas season be one of joyous sacrifice for one another. Deny yourself many unnecessary things that others may have the necessities of life. I will accept those gifts as personal offerings to me, made in the temple of your loving appreciation.

"Celebrate this Christmas by being with me on Christmas Eve, in meditation, and on Christmas Day in festivity.

"Though I was born so many centuries ago, I am born anew in the cradle of your love, whenever you call on me with ceaseless devotion. I am with you at Christmas and in reality at all times, if you call me in the secret depths of your heart."

Christmas Day Address

The Inner Celebration of Christmas

Free your mind; let all restless thoughts disappear from within. Make your temple of devotion a fitting sanctuary for Christ, the Infinite Baby Christ, to be born with new awakening power that you may feel His presence in your consciousness.

"O living Infinite Christ, present in the body of Jesus and us all, manifest Thyself in the trueness of Thy glory, in the sovereign power of Thy light, and in the omniscience of Thy wisdom. Out of the womb of all creation, be born in the cradle of our consciousness that we may worship Thee in truth and understanding in the all-revealing light of wisdom. O Christ, purify our consciousness that it may embrace all space and enfold the songs of birds and the symphony of the dawn spreading over the sky and hills, warming us with Thy vitality in the sunshine. O Thou the only pure reflection of God within us, manifest Thyself unto us; for Thou and we and God are one. Make us realize this.

"O Christ, especially on this sacred morning, manifest Thy consciousness within us, reveal Thine omnipresence all around us, that we might understand and perceive Thee as Thou art, behind the veil of nature, and cradled within us.

"*Aum.* Peace. Amen."

Many seek the passing glory of material things. Those who seek the Infinite, not delaying their search until tomorrow, will reach the blissful Goal of their seeking. As I have said, it is not in the interest of a spiritual organisation that we seek you. I am trying to point out to your consciousness that it is you who must seek from the eagerness of your own will. The teacher asks nothing from the disciple, lest in depending on the student the guru isn't free to offer soul-liberating discipline.

For the unconditional relationship I have with my guru, Swami Sri Yukteswarji, I shall ever be grateful. Now I realize why most of the great masters keep silent—drawn out only rarely by those who are in tune. Their standard of truth is so high and so sincere that it is very difficult for other people to understand them. I can never be unmindful of what my guru has done for me. Any pride or ego touching my soul he drove away; God's glory reigns there. I am very happy that

some of you also have come here for your own highest good. Our purpose is to try to hold you only by your own Self-realization.

So many are celebrating Christ's Day without knowing at all the purpose for which they should be celebrating. Neither does Christ recognise those observances. Some make Christmas a merely social affair: they engage in the festivities with glassy smiles, and then Christmas is over and they are glad of it. The material celebration of Christmas has some good points and some bad. To a certain extent Christ comes into your consciousness when you are happy and loving and giving. But the purely material way of honouring Christ's birth by gifts and social events defeats its purpose if Christ is absent.

Do not take lightly the celebration of Christmas

Do not take lightly the celebration of the birth of Jesus. These holy days should remind you of that great Christ—the divine life manifested by Jesus. That is the spiritual side of this holiday.

In most all spiritual celebrations, including those in the Orient, there is some material rejoicing, such as in the enjoyment of a special repast with loved ones; but that should not be the foremost thing. In the exchange of gifts also, there is a sharing of love and a feeling of expansion. What you give with the sincerity of your heart Christ himself accepts. But if you give grudgingly or with pride, Christ goes away. And do not give anything that is associated with wrongdoing.

I always prepare my mind for Christmas—everything that I do is with great happiness—and Christ has come with an even greater force in my consciousness. If Christ comes, if He honours you with His presence, if He accepts your hospitality, you shall never say, "I am tired of Him"—as you inevitably say of material pleasures. The Infinite Christ is unending joy, boundless happiness; how can that tire you? He knocks at the gates of your consciousness, but it is locked with ignorance. How can He get in? You must prepare yourself so that you can let Him in to be born a second time as the awakened Christ Consciousness in you.

What is the "Second Coming"?

The first coming of Christ was at the birth of creation.* Christ was born not only in the body of Jesus; Christ Consciousness was already manifest in all creation. Jesus tuned in with and manifested that Christ Consciousness.

* "Before Abraham was, I am"—John 8:58.

So we celebrate today the birth of Jesus the Christ—Jesus who knew what "Christ" meant. What was Christ, then?

Aeons ago in the land of Eternity, when God was alone as the ever-existing, ever-new Joy, He mused: "I am alone, with nobody to enjoy Me." He breathed a wish, and the Holy Ghost (symbolized in the Virgin Mary) was born. The Holy Ghost or Mary carries within its womb the Christ Consciousness (symbolized in the Son)—the reflection of the Cosmic Consciousness (God the Father) in and beyond all creation.

Thus Christ Consciousness has actually come a second time already, in the body of Jesus. It has also come in the bodies of Mahavatar Babaji, Lahiri Mahasaya, Sri Yukteswar, and all the great ones; and that same Christ must be born again in your consciousness. That is the meaning of the "Second Coming" of Christ.

Jesus was a model of the omnipresent Christ Consciousness. His life shows that he had broken all limitations and had found his oneness with God in everything. In his omnipresent consciousness, he knew about the death of Lazarus and could say, "Lazarus sleepeth," and bring him forth alive from the tomb. Those who look upon life externally take it at face value. But when it is seen internally, behind its gross manifestation, then we behold the one Eternal Life everywhere.

Break the walls of all limitations

Break the walls of limitations that shut the Christ Consciousness away from you—greed, selfishness, caste, race. God wants to be the only love in all creeds and nationalities, no matter the mode of worship or the colour of the skin. Christ wants to come in all human hearts, but He cannot penetrate through the barriers of selfishness and prejudice. Yes, the Infinite Christ Consciousness is present everywhere invisibly, but if you want to experience the manifestation of God visibly, you must break these walls of ignorance. God has given you the freedom to shut Him out or let Him in. The barrier is not in your vision, but in your consciousness. Christ is already with you; He has already come, but prejudicial limitations obscure that divine presence. If you want Christ to come in a perceptible way in your consciousness, you must break down all obstructions. They are the walls of Satan.

Sunder all limitations that the cradle of your consciousness may be big enough to hold the Infinite Baby Christ.

As soon as you will meditate in the yogic way on the centres of spiritual perception in the spine, Christ Consciousness will bestow on

you the presence of calmness. Calmness is one of the greatest gifts of God; it is the eye of the Spirit, the pure intuitive perception of the soul. Any time you do wrong, it is because you were not calm. Pray that you may always have this inner soul-calmness.

The gifts of Christ Consciousness

Forgiveness is another quality of the Infinite Christ. Though omnipotent Christ Consciousness was fully manifest in the body of Jesus, he let himself be crucified; but with that great power he had in the consciousness of Christ, by forgiveness he has held the hearts of people these many centuries. He had the power to destroy his enemies, and yet he said, "Father, forgive them; they know not what they do." That is a gift of the Christ Consciousness—love that can never be killed by any anger or hatred. Those who do wrong to you, give them that Christ-love silently; and once their hearts feel that love, the devil of hate shall pass out from them, and they will be healed.

Satan has his influence everywhere. But if you can destroy evil from your heart and can make it an altar of forgiveness and divine love, then Christ shall come and reign there.

Nobility of heart and a spirit of service—to be big enough to behave nobly in every situation, and to serve all—these also come as gifts of Christ Consciousness. To serve all means to be conscious that you are in everybody, not just in the one little body you call your own—for we are all made of the one same omnipresent consciousness of God. Selfishness is the root cause of war and of all forms of divisiveness; it is also the death of spirituality. When you limit your consciousness to your own body, and regard everything in terms of yourself, you shut out Christ Consciousness. You must begin to look upon others as an extension of yourself. "It is myself that is suffering in that body; it is myself that is filled with happiness in that body." Service is one of the best investments for expansion of consciousness. When you do for others just as you are doing for yourself, then that is one way, the social way, to cultivate Christ Consciousness.

Real Christ-love comes to open those Christmas packages that are expressions of an awakening spiritualized consciousness. That bliss you feel when Christ comes is not the emotional happiness aroused by receiving material things. Blessedness is the consciousness that comes by the contact of that Christ within. That is the Christmas celebration I want to impress on your consciousness.

To enjoy a real Christmas you should celebrate the birth of Christ Consciousness in the spiritual centres of divine perception in the brain and spine. In deep meditation you behold all the astral lights of the spinal centres, and there is an exchange of the Christ Consciousness and your consciousness. That is the real Christmas festivity.

Celebrate the astral Christmas in the spiritual centres of the spine

When the Christ Consciousness comes to you, you find within you the whole cosmos, with whirling worlds and universes hanging like ornaments around the Christmas tree of the spine. That is how Jesus celebrated "Christmas," the birth of Christ Consciousness within him.

How many men today are walking about with Christ in their breasts as Jesus did? The beauty of the stars and the glory of the moon —all were born in the mind of Jesus. Everything is contained in the Christ Consciousness that was manifest in Jesus. He celebrated that Christ Consciousness in his spinal awareness.

If you want really to know Jesus, meditate on the Christ Consciousness in him. Then you will be able to say tomorrow, "O yes! I celebrated Christmas in the real way." Tomorrow will tell the story. And why let today slip by, if you can find Christ today? And even if you cannot perceive Christ today, remember that every day He comes; but you must be able to *receive* Him. The blind man does not know the beauty of the sun. Christ is present in you, but you don't know it. You must prepare yourself for His coming by silence and meditation.

Just be happy with everything. Feel good will toward all. Cast off prejudicial limitations. Make up your mind to be good morally. Then Christ will be always with you. This is one way of being in tune with Christ Consciousness, of celebrating Christmas.

Two ways to be one with Christ

But the second way, the deeper way, of celebrating Christmas is through the uplifting of your consciousness through the spine into the higher centres of consciousness in the brain. This is the greatest way to celebrate the birth of Christ, in the silence of your soul, where no man knows what you prize nor what you love. Sing to Christ a glorious song unheard by any, a song of bursting love, an undying prayer from your heart; then Christ shall manifest Himself a second time. You shall behold the Christ of the churches, the Christ of centuried sacred lore. The Man nobody knows, the Christ nobody knows, shall be known inwardly by you.

Make a resolution today to find that Christ. Open the gates of your heart; expand yourself in serving others materially, morally, and spiritually. And as you become calm through deep meditation, and as the fire of your devotion waxes stronger and stronger, you shall see the face of Christ.

Remember—the glowing fires of devotion, not the old way of lukewarm prayers. Crucify your spiritual ignorance. Stop the storms of mental discord. Christ must come to you, for it is of utmost importance to your happiness. Make this vow to Christ: "My life shall not slip away this time without my knowing Thee, O Christ." Let Him not come and silently vanish without your being aware of it.

Somebody once said, "Where is progress? Are we not walking slowly toward death?" It is true of those who do not know Christ. But those who know Him see that they are moving, not toward the valley of the shadow of death, but toward the peaks of Christ Consciousness wherein there lies no death. They see the flicker of Christ's omnipresent light and joyously exclaim, "O Christ, by my meditation and prayer You are coming into my life again." And they shall feel Him everywhere—in the hearts of men, in the fragrance of flowers, and in all other created things.

May Christ come in your consciousness a second time as prosperity, as health, as the perception and fulfilment of all your hopes in the divine consciousness. And may Christ come to you in finding divine love through the perfection of your love in some human relationship, and in finding omnipresence in your human consciousness. May Christ come, bringing to you infinite bliss, infinite wisdom, infinite joy, as He is born in the cradle of your heart. May Christ come to you a second time in the vibration of your body as the *Aum* out of which all bodies, all universes, have been created. May He come a second time—to you—and be established in your consciousness forever.

Part II

An Easter Message

Resurrect Yourself!

As Christ resurrected his consciousness from the sepulchre of mortal limitations, so must you learn to resurrect your mind by meditation from the tomb of material desires and body confinement to the consciousness of omnipresence.

Resurrect your calmness from beneath the soil of restlessness; resurrect your wisdom from the enshrouding earthliness of ignorance; resurrect your love from beneath the sod of mundane human attachment—with its limited love for family, society, and country—to divine love for all.

As Jesus withdrew his mind from the body by ecstasy and united it with all-pervading Spirit, so through the consciousness of Christ developed within yourself by constant meditation unite your soul with omniscient Spirit, your life with Eternal Life.

My Easter Wish for You

While life is templed in the body, it constantly resurrects old tissues by filling them with the buoyancy of new cells. Similarly, Christ Consciousness keeps on remodeling and revivifying the deathly-change-infected cosmos, its universes and all the bejewelled stellar and solar systems, the earth—every created thing. It resurrected the body of Jesus, the Son of man, after he was crucified. As the Son of God, Jesus knew that his life was one with the all-reviving Cosmic Life; thus he proclaimed: "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."

This is my Easter prayer. May all true devotees of God, uplifted by the transparent purity of their lives, begin to radiate the Infinite Light, equally present in all, even as Jesus did, and remember the long-forgotten truth that they are all potential Sons of God.

May each one of you be so inspired and sustained by the results of *Kriya Yoga* that you will follow the path of Self-Realization all the way, and learn to resurrect the delusion-entombed soul and commingle it in the ever new vitality of Spirit. May you thus be able to lift the soul beyond the conscious and sleep states and expand it into God in the superconscious sphere.

Behold thine immortal Self resurrected with Christ in the illuminating Light of Christ Consciousness, present in every soul, every flower, every atom.

An Easter Message

Resurrect Your Soul Consciousness in God

Christ is risen from the sepulchre of your indifference, if you would but behold Him in the light of your devotion.

He is risen from the imprisoning walls of flesh if you, a sleeping son of God, would come out of your bodily prison into the freedom of Spirit.

Crucify your ignorance and hidebound evil customs and rise from the tomb of narrowness into the openness of Cosmic Brotherhood.

Resurrect your soul from the entombment of reincarnations.

Christ fragrance is ascending from the living graves of the human consciousness of true devotees everywhere, and descending on the sanctuary of their devotion. Cleanse the altar of your heart with tears of repentance, so that Christ Consciousness, love of all races, all creatures, may be resurrected and made manifest within you.

When your body is crucified with disease, ascend into the consciousness of health.

When your mind is crucified with trials and temptations, arise into the sphere of self-control.

When you are entombed in sorrow, resurrect yourself into happiness.

When you are buried beneath restlessness, resurrect your mind into continued calmness in deep meditative silence.

Your God-love has long remained hidden within you, crucified by your inner indifference. By daily deep meditation, awaken your spiritual ardour and resurrect it into the consciousness of the Absolute Bliss.

An Easter Prayer

Resurrect Me in Thee

O Spirit, command my soul to arise from the sepulchre of littleness into Thy vastness of everywhereness.

Lift its matter-caged consciousness into omnipresent freedom in Thee.

Teach me to resurrect my wisdom from beneath the debris of ignorance,

And to resurrect myself from dogmatism to the everlasting life in Thy Wisdom.

Awaken my divine sympathy from beneath the shroud of selfishness.

Resurrect my divine love from beneath the mound of attachment.

Bless me, that I may bring my soul out of the gloom-grave of evil into the light of perpetual goodness.

Teach me to resurrect my soul from the tomb of temporal pleasures into Thine everlasting happiness.

From beneath the soil of sorrow take my buried soul up into Thy Joyous Self.

Awaken me, that I may arise from the tomb of flesh into the consciousness of my cosmic body, extricating my soul from the bodily clod to become omnipresent in Thee.

Resurrect my consciousness from the sepulchre of ever thirsty, mad, earthly desires into the omnipresent, ever-abiding, ever-satisfying Christ-Peace within me.

Even as Jesus, in only three days, resurrected himself from all circumscriptions of his mortal body, so bless me that I may erelong resurrect myself forever from the tomb of all my bad habits into freedom in the Christ-Wisdom within me.

Pluck the lotus of my devotion from the mire of earthly forgetfulness and wear it on Thy breast of ever awake remembrance of me.

Resurrect me in Thee.

An Easter Prayer

Bless Us, O Christ

With solemn reverence we offer homage today unto thee, our great Lord Jesus, in whom was manifest the Universal Christ, and whose grace descended upon us. We offer unto thee, O Christ, thought-flowers that symbolize the fragrance of our hearts' devotion.

Throughout eternity the event of thy resurrection is celebrated by the gods and in our souls, that our consciousness also find resurrection in Christ Consciousness; that we rise above our ignorance and manifest the highest wisdom of that Infinite Intelligence.

Bless us this morning, O Christ, that we may realize the universal significance of thy resurrection: that our souls, reflections of Christ Consciousness, be resurrected in thine Immortal Consciousness evermore.

O Universal Christ, be awakened within us! We have crucified Thee with our ignorance. Be resurrected within us again as everlasting Christ-Wisdom and perennial bliss.

Lead us from darkness to light, lift us from ignorance to wisdom, resurrect us from sorrow to eternal bliss in Thee, O Infinite Christ!

An Easter Prayer

The Christ of Cosmic Easter

O Jesus, thy soul polished off the dust of death and wore the glistening jewels of lifetrons in a resurrected body. But as the Christ Omnipresence, thy spirit doth constantly renew all luminaries —the cosmic gems of lucent stars, physical and astral universes, gross and luminous planets, human and angelic beings, molecules, atoms, electrons, protons, lifetrons—and dost place these ever-dazzling ornaments upon thine Infinite Being.

Jesus, thou didst live and, crucified, lived again in a reawakened body. The Christ Consciousness, ceaselessly crucified by pharisees of change, reappears in renewed universes, reincarnated beings, in an earth of matter, and the brilliancy of heaven.

From winter's tomb of lifeless blossoms, thou, O Christ, art resurrected in new buds of roses, marigolds, bluebells, jasmine, and worldful varieties of flowers. Ever-mutating, multicoloured flowers of lifetrons growing in the gardens of the astral land are fragrant thrones of thy Presence. New nations—emerging from the tomb of self-created war, atomic destructions, evolutions, revolutions—all bring out new phases of thine Indestructible Being. Beneath the transparent tomb of creation's ever-changing waves, we behold thy never changing Oceanic Presence.

On this Easter we celebrate thee as Jesus and as the Christ of Cosmic Easter.

An Easter Prayer

Resurrect Us From the Darkness of Delusion

Easter may bring its delights of traditional Easter lilies, gift-bearing bunnies, and variously decorated eggs. But I pray that as you celebrate Christ's resurrection these be symbolic of the lily of Christ-wisdom opening in purity in the garden of your soul; that you taste the sweetness of Christ-love in your heart and enjoy the infinitely coloured eggs of its blessings of true happiness; and that, like the fast-footed bounteous bunny, you may quicken your pace toward the Divine Home.

Pray to Christ the following prayer in the secret inner temple of deep meditation:

"Thou didst resurrect thyself from the bondage of flesh, karma, ignorance, and reincarnation to inspire us with thine invisible omnipresent wisdom, that we may know how to resurrect the divine image within us from the bodily confinement of sense lures. From the miasma of doubt, resurrect our vision into the region of invincible understanding. From the atmosphere of mental smallness teach us to resurrect our largeheartedness in the kingdom of love for all.

"From the darkness of delusion resurrect us into the sphere of Thy lambent effulgence. From race and class prejudices teach us to resurrect our spirit of brotherhood in the oneness of universal union. Bless us, O Christ, that from this moment we use our inner sense of intuition's discrimination to follow all the mental, moral, and spiritual laws by which we can resurrect our souls from the enthralments of cosmic delusion into the everlasting freedom of God-contact."

An Easter Message

Easter Awakening

The little wavelet of Christ Life played helpfully over the bosom of the Cosmic Life for a while, and then it vanished within the Ocean's tenderness, not to die, but to be feted with eternal Ambrosia, and to come back again to declare the immortality of even its finite existence. The ocean of God throbbed once more in the resurrected Prince Jesus.

Flowers fade never to return; but Jesus only slept to obey the sweet command of Nature, and woke again to declare his mastery over her.

Jesus has silenced the laughter of multitudes with their unbelieving eyes, and the audacious poetic assertion that no traveller has ever returned from death's bourne, by coming back from the place of no return.

With the appearance of the risen Jesus in this mundane domain, a hope buried in the immortality of every soul was resurrected in the hearts of a thousand million mortals—the hope that they, too, could wipe away the sting of death from their breasts of everlastingness.

Christ hid himself again to show that he could not only resurrect his eternalness in the body of Jesus, but also in every blossom, and in every living being that would ever smile in the garden of creation through endless aeons.

Christ was resurrected not only on Easter morn; at-one with the Infinite Christ Consciousness he reanimates himself in the dawn of each soul's awakening. Our souls die every day, whenever we are buried in the tomb of ignorance; we resurrect ourselves again in Cosmic Wisdom.

Banish the death consciousness perceived during the sleep of delusion, and resurrect your soul in the ever-reigning Light of Immortality. Let this be your Easter awakening.

A Meditation on Resurrection

Christ is risen. He is risen from the limitations of the physical body, the astral body, and the causal body into Omnipresence. One with omnipresent Christ Consciousness, Jesus is risen in the heart of every flower, every ray of sunshine, every noble thought. He is risen in the atomic age, and all its devastations will not hide the birth of his spirit of new life, new humanity, rising from the cradle of wisdom and universal love.

He is risen in our minds, our hearts, our souls—there is no separation between him and us. He is walking in the garden of our love, in the garden of our sacred devotion, in the garden of our meditation and *Kriya Yoga*.

He is risen in every atom and cell, he is risen in the clouds, he is risen in all planets. He is risen in the universes and the wandering radiations around the universes, and in the cool light beyond. He is risen from the universes into the quiet of Cosmic Consciousness. And he will rise again in you, through your devotion and *Kriya Yoga*. When your wisdom shall awaken, you will behold the resurrection of Christ within you. And through your meditation and divine communion you shall be resurrected with him, from the sepulchre of the body and mortal consciousness into the ever blissful infinitude of Spirit.

"O Christ, thou art resurrected in Spirit. We rejoice in thy resurrection, and in its reassurance of thy promise: that as children of God, having descended into the sepulchre of flesh, we too shall reascend into our Father's kingdom. On this Easter, all our devotion, all the cries of our hearts, all the perfume of goodness within us, we lay at thy feet of omnipresence. We are thine, receive us! Through the Christ Consciousness, resurrect us with thee in the Eternal Spirit. Keep us in that kingdom of Bliss ever and forever."

About the Author

Paramahansa Yogananda was born Mukunda Lal Ghosh on January 5, 1893, in the north Indian city of Gorakhpur, near the Himalaya mountains. From his earliest years, it was clear that his life was marked for a divine destiny. According to those closest to him, even as a child the depth of his spiritual awareness and experience was far beyond the ordinary. In his youth he sought out many of India's sages and saints, hoping to find an illumined teacher to guide him in his spiritual quest.

It was in 1910, at the age of seventeen, that he met and became a disciple of the revered Swami Sri Yukteswar. In the hermitage of this great master, he spent the better part of the next ten years, receiving Sri Yukteswar's strict but loving spiritual discipline. After he graduated from Calcutta University in 1915, his Guru bestowed on him the formal vows of a monk of India's venerable monastic Swami Order, at which time he received the name Yogananda (signifying bliss, *ananda,* through divine union, *yoga*).

In 1917, Sri Yogananda began his life's work with the founding of a "how-to-live" school for boys, where modern educational methods were combined with yoga training and instruction in spiritual ideals. Three years later he was invited to serve as India's delegate to an International Congress of Religious Liberals convening in Boston. His address to the Congress, on "The Science of Religion," was enthusiastically received.

For the next several years, he lectured and taught on the East Coast and in 1924 embarked on a cross-continental speaking tour. To the tens of thousands of Westerners who attended his lectures during the decade that followed, his discourses on the unity of "the original teachings of Jesus Christ and the original Yoga taught by Bhagavan Krishna" were a revelation. The *Los Angeles Times* reported on January 28, 1925: "The Philharmonic Auditorium presents the extraordinary spectacle of thousands...being turned away an hour before the advertised opening of a lecture with the 3,000-seat hall filled to its utmost capacity. Swami Yogananda is the attraction. A Hindu invading the United States to bring God in the midst of a Christian community, preaching the essence of Christian doctrine."

Later that year, he established in Los Angeles the international headquarters of Self-Realization Fellowship, the society he had founded in 1920 to disseminate his teachings and perpetuate the work he had begun.

"Paramahansa Yogananda brought to the West not only India's perennial promise of God-realization, but also a practical method by

which spiritual aspirants from all walks of life may progress rapidly toward that goal," wrote Quincy Howe, Jr., Ph.D., Professor of Classics at Scripps College. "Originally appreciated in the West only on the most lofty and abstract level, the spiritual legacy of India is now accessible as practice and experience to all who aspire to know God, not in the beyond, but in the here and now....Yogananda has placed within the reach of all the most exalted methods of contemplation."

The *Cincinnati Enquirer* reported on December 1, 1926: "Yesterday in the Hotel Sinton, Swami Yogananda was greeted by over a thousand men and women, hundreds being turned away. In this enthusiastic throng, there were litterateurs, medical men, leaders of fashion, clergymen, and indeed followers drawn from many walks of life. The Swami was continually interrupted with responsive applause, his words being listened to with profound attention." And according to the *Washington Post,* January 25, 1927: "Approximately 5,000 persons crowded the auditorium to hear his initial lecture...at the Washington Auditorium, where the Swami has broken all records for sustained interest."

After fifteen years of teaching in the West, Sri Yogananda returned to India in 1935. There he had a long-awaited reunion with his guru, Swami Sri Yukteswar, who honoured him with India's highest religious title, *Paramahansa,* bestowed on those deemed to have achieved irrevocable union with God. While in his native land, he travelled and lectured and met with many spiritual luminaries, including Mahatma Gandhi, who requested initiation in *Kriya Yoga* from him.

Returning to America at the end of 1936, Paramahansaji began to withdraw somewhat from his nationwide public lecturing to devote himself to building an enduring foundation for his worldwide work and to the writings that would carry his message to future generations. His life story, *Autobiography of a Yogi,* was published in 1946 and substantially expanded by him in 1951. Recognised from the beginning as a landmark work, the book has been in print continuously through Yogoda Satsanga Society of India/Self-Realization Fellowship since its publication fifty years ago, inspiring new readers decade after decade.

On March 7, 1952, Paramahansa Yogananda entered *mahasamadhi,* a God-illumined master's conscious exit from the body at the time of physical death. His passing occasioned an outpouring of reverent appreciation from spiritual leaders, dignitaries, journalists, friends, and disciples all over the world. The former religion editor of the *Los Angeles Times,* Dan Thrapp, stated in 1992: "All through history you can find people who come along—Jesus, Buddha, and other people—who are inspired, and who have a way of

expressing it and have charisma with other people, so that their influence spreads. I think Yogananda was one of those people....He was inspired...one of the greats. He showed the way for people into a purer, unadulterated type of faith, a universal faith."

The Government of India issued a commemorative stamp in honour of the renowned guru in 1977, which was accompanied by these words: "The ideal of love for God and service to humanity found full expression in the life of Paramahansa Yogananda....Though the major part of his life was spent outside India, still he takes his place among our great saints. His work continues to grow and shine ever more brightly, drawing people everywhere on the path of the pilgrimage of the Spirit."

Scholars and journalists have echoed this appraisal of Sri Yogananda's continuing influence. "Few books have had a greater impact on popular theology than Paramahansa Yogananda's *Autobiography of a Yogi,*" notes Phyllis Tickle, former religion editor of *Publishers Weekly*. His teachings "made an indelible mark on the course of American spirituality," wrote Dr. Robert S. Ellwood, former chairman of the University of Southern California's School of Religion. "Yogananda has become an image—a remarkable, deep, sweet, poetic, ecstatic man enraptured of cosmic life—who has changed the map of American religious life."

Today, the spiritual and humanitarian work begun by Paramahansa Yogananda continues under the direction of Swami Chidananda Giri, president of Yogoda Satsanga Society of India/Self-Realization Fellowship.* In addition to publishing Paramahansa Yogananda's books and his other writings, lectures, and informal talks—including his *Yogoda Satsanga Lessons,* a comprehensive series for home study; and a quarterly magazine, YSS/SRF—the society guides members in their practice of Sri Yoganandaji's teachings; oversees YSS/SRF ashrams, temples, retreats, kendras, and meditation centres around the world, as well as the YSS/SRF monastic communities; and coordinates the Worldwide Prayer Circle, which serves as an instrument to help bring healing to those in physical, mental, or spiritual need and greater harmony among the nations.

An award-winning documentary film about Paramahansa Yogananda's life and work, *Awake: The Life of Yogananda,* was released in October 2014.

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* The society founded by Sri Sri Paramahansa Yogananda in the United states in 1920 (and as Yogoda Satsanga Society of India in 1917). The international headquarters, the Mother Centre, is in Los Angeles, California. Paramahansa Yogananda has explained that the name Self-realization Fellowship signifies: "Fellowship with God through Self-realization, and friendship with all truth-seeking souls.

Paramahansa Yogananda: A Yogi in Life and Death

Sri Sri Paramahansa Yogananda entered mahasamadhi (a yogi's final conscious exit from the body) in Los Angeles, California, on March 7, 1952, after concluding his speech at a banquet held in honour of H. E. Binay R. Sen, Ambassador of India.

The great world teacher demonstrated the value of yoga (scientific techniques for God-realization) not only in life but in death. Weeks after his departure his unchanged face shone with the divine luster of incorruptibility.

Mr. Harry T. Rowe, Los Angeles Mortuary Director, Forest Lawn Memorial-Park (in which the body of the great master is temporarily placed), sent Self-Realization Fellowship a notarized letter from which the following extracts are taken:

"The absence of any visual signs of decay in the dead body of Paramahansa Yogananda offers the most extraordinary case in our experience....No physical disintegration was visible in his body even twenty days after death....No indication of mould was visible on his skin, and no visible desiccation (drying up) took place in the bodily tissues. This state of perfect preservation of a body is, so far as we know from mortuary annals, an unparalleled one....At the time of receiving Yogananda's body, the Mortuary personnel expected to observe, through the glass lid of the casket, the usual progressive signs of bodily decay. Our astonishment increased as day followed day without bringing any visible change in the body under observation. Yogananda's body was apparently in a phenomenal state of immutability....

"No odour of decay emanated from his body at any time.... The physical appearance of Yogananda on March 27th, just before the bronze cover of the casket was put into position, was the same as it had been on March 7th. He looked on March 27th as fresh and as unravaged by decay as he had looked on the night of his death. On March 27th there was no reason to say that his body had suffered any visible physical disintegration at all. For these reasons we state again that the case of Paramahansa Yogananda is unique in our experience."

Aims and Ideals
of
Yogoda Satsanga Society of India

As set forth by
Sri Sri Paramahansa Yogananda, Gurudeva and Founder
Sri Sri Swami Chidananda Giri, President

To disseminate among the nations a knowledge of definite scientific techniques for attaining direct personal experience of God.

To teach that the purpose of life is the evolution, through self-effort, of man's limited mortal consciousness into God Consciousness; and to this end to establish Yogoda Satsanga Society of India temples for God-communion throughout the world, and to encourage the establishment of individual temples of God in the homes and in the hearts of men.

To reveal the complete harmony and basic oneness of original Yoga as taught by Bhagavan Krishna and original Christianity as taught by Jesus Christ; and to show that these principles of truth are the common scientific foundation of all true religions.

To point out the one divine highway to which all paths of true religious beliefs eventually lead: the highway of daily, scientific, devotional meditation on God.

To liberate man from his threefold suffering: physical disease, mental inharmonies, and spiritual ignorance.

To encourage "plain living and high thinking"; and to spread a spirit of brotherhood among all peoples by teaching the eternal basis of their unity: kinship with God.

To demonstrate the superiority of mind over body, of soul over mind.

To overcome evil by good, sorrow by joy, cruelty by kindness, ignorance by wisdom.

To unite science and religion through realization of the unity of their underlying principles.

To advocate cultural and spiritual understanding between East and West, and the exchange of their finest distinctive features.

To serve mankind as one's larger Self.

Also from Yogoda Satsanga Society of India...

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF A YOGI

By Paramahansa Yogananda

This acclaimed autobiography presents a fascinating portrait of one of the great spiritual figures of our time. With engaging candour, eloquence, and wit, Paramahansa Yogananda narrates the inspiring chronicle of his life—the experiences of his remarkable childhood, encounters with many saints and sages during his youthful search throughout India for an illumined teacher, ten years of training in the hermitage of a revered yoga master, and the three decades that he lived and taught in America. Also recorded here are his meetings with Mahatma Gandhi, Rabindranath Tagore, Luther Burbank, the Catholic stigmatist Therese Neumann, and other celebrated spiritual personalities of East and West.

Autobiography of a Yogi is at once a beautifully written account of an exceptional life and a profound introduction to the ancient science of yoga and its time-honoured tradition of meditation. The author clearly explains the subtle but definite laws behind both the ordinary events of everyday life and the extraordinary events commonly termed miracles. His absorbing life story thus becomes the background for a penetrating and unforgettable look at the ultimate mysteries of human existence.

First published in 1946 and enlarged by Paramahansa Yogananda in 1951, the book has been kept in print continuously by Yogoda Satsanga Society of India (Self-Realization Fellowship). It has been translated into more than forty-five languages and is widely used as a text and reference work in colleges and universities. A perennial best-seller, *Autobiography of a Yogi* has found its way into the hearts of millions of readers around the world.

* * *

"A rare account."— **The New York Times**

"A fascinating and clearly annotated study."— *Newsweek*

"There has been nothing before, written in English or in any other European language, like this presentation of Yoga."— **Columbia University Press**

"Sheer revelation...should help the human race to understand itself better...auto-bio-graphy at its very best...told with delightful wit and compelling sincerity...as fascinating as any novel."— **News-Sentinel,** *Fort Wayne, Indiana*

"Paramahansa Yogananda is...a man whose inspiration has been reverently received in all corners of the globe....There is something inexpressibly beautiful in the spiritual teaching which comes out of the East. It is able to heal and change the soul of the West. It is the teaching of Self-Realization."— **Riders Review,** *London*

Other Books by Sri Sri Paramahansa Yogananda

Available at your local bookstores or from:
Yogoda Satsanga Society of India
Paramahansa Yogananda Path
Ranchi 834001, Jharkhand

God Talks With Arjuna: The Bhagavad Gita–A New Translation and Commentary

In this monumental two-volume work, Paramahansa Yogananda reveals the innermost essence of India's most renowned scripture. Exploring its psychological, spiritual, and metaphysical depths, he presents a sweeping chronicle of the soul's journey to enlightenment through the royal science of God-realization.

Man's Eternal Quest

A collection of 52 of Sri Yogananda's lectures and informal talks, presenting many aspects of his "how-to-live" teachings and exploring little-known and seldom-understood aspects of meditation, life after death, the nature of creation, health and healing, the unlimited powers of the mind, and the eternal quest that finds fulfilment only in God.

The Divine Romance

A wide-ranging anthology of 47 lectures, informal talks, and essays, including: How to Cultivate Divine Love; Harmonizing Physical, Mental, and Spiritual Methods of Healing; A World Without Boundaries; Controlling Your Destiny; The Yoga Art of Overcoming Mortal Consciousness and Death; The Cosmic Lover; Finding the Joy in Life.

Journey to Self-realization:

Volume III of the collected talks and essays presents Paramahansa Yogananda's unique combination of wisdom, compassion, down-to-earth guidance, and encouragement on dozens of fascinating subjects, including Quickening Human Evolution, How to Express Everlasting Youthfulness, and Realizing God in Your Daily Life.

Where There Is Light: Insight and Inspiration for Meeting Life's Challenges

Gems of thought arranged by subject; a unique handbook to which readers can quickly turn for a reassuring sense of direction in times of uncertainty or crisis, or for a renewed awareness of the ever present power of God one can draw upon in daily life.

Whispers from Eternity

A collection of Sri Sri Paramahansa Yogananda's prayers and divine experiences in the elevated states of meditation. Expressed in a majestic rhythm and poetic beauty, his words reveal the inexhaustible variety of God's nature, and the infinite sweetness with which He responds to those who seek Him.

***In the Sanctuary of the Soul:** A Guide to Effective Prayer*

Complied from the works of Paramahansa Yogananda, this inspiring devotional companion reveals ways of making prayer a daily source of love, strength, and guidance.

***Inner Peace:** How to Be Calmly Active and Actively Calm*

A practical and inspiring guide, compiled from the talks and writings of Paramahansa Yogananda, that demonstrates how we can be "actively calm" by creating peace through meditation, and "calmly active" —centred in the stillness and joy of our own essential nature while living a dynamic, fulfilling, and balanced life. Winner of the 2000 Benjamin Franklin Award—best book in the field of Metaphysics/Spirituality.

The Science of Religion

Within every human being, Sri Sri Paramahansa Yogananda writes, there is one inescapable desire: to overcome suffering and attain a happiness that does not end. Explaining how it is possible to fulfil these longings, he examines the relative effectiveness of the different approaches to this goal.

How You Can Talk With God

Defining God as both the transcendent, universal Spirit and the intimately personal Father, Mother, Friend, and Lover of all, Sri Sri Paramahansa Yogananda shows how close the Lord is to each one of us, and how He can be persuaded to "break His silence" and respond in a tangible way.

Metaphysical Meditations

More than 300 spiritually uplifting meditations, prayers, and affirmations that can be used to develop greater health and vitality, creativity, self-confidence, and calmness; and to live more fully in a conscious awareness of the blissful presence of God.

Scientific Healing Affirmations

Sri Sri Paramahansa Yogananda presents here a profound explanation of the science of affirmation. He makes clear why affirmations work, and how to use the power of word and thought not only to bring about healing but to effect desired change in every area of life. Includes a wide variety of affirmations.

Sayings of Paramahansa Yogananda

A collection of sayings and wise counsel that conveys Sri Sri Paramahansa Yogananda's candid and loving responses to those who came to him for guidance. Recorded by a number of his close disciples, the anecdotes in this book give the reader an opportunity to share in their personal encounters with the great Guru.

The Law of Success

Explains dynamic principles for achieving one's goals in life, and outlines the universal laws that bring success and fulfilment—personal, professional, and spiritual.

Words of Cosmic Chants

Words to 60 songs of devotion, with an introduction explaining how spiritual chanting can lead to God-communion.

Audio Recordings of Sri Sri Paramahansa Yogananda

Beholding the One in All
One Life Versus Reincarnation
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Awake in the Cosmic Dream
Be a Smile Millionaire
Songs of My Heart
To Make Heaven on Earth
In the Glory of the Spirit
The Great Light of God
Self-Realization: The Inner and the Outer Path

Other Publications From Yogoda Satsanga Society of India

The Holy Science *by Sri Sri Swami Sri Yukteswar Giri*

Only Love: Living the Spiritual Life in a Changing World *by Sri Sri Daya Mata*

Finding The Joy Within You: Personal Counsel for God-Centred Living *by Sri Sri Daya Mata*

Enter the Quiet Heart: *by Sri Sri Daya Mata*

God Alone: The Life and Letters of a Saint *by Sri Gyanamata*

"Mejda": The Family and the Early Life of Sri Sri Paramahansa Yogananda *by Sananda Lal Ghosh*

Yogoda Satsanga **Magazine**

A complete book order form describing all of the Yogoda Satsanga Society of India publications and audio/video recordings is available on request.

Free Introductory Booklet: *Undreamed-of Possibilities*

The scientific techniques of meditation taught by Paramahansa Yogananda, including *Kriya Yoga* — as well as his guidance on all aspects of balanced spiritual living — are presented in the *Yogoda Satsanga Lessons*. A free introductory booklet, *Undreamed-of Possibilities,* is available on our website www.yssofindia.org.

YOGODA SATSANGA SOCIETY OF INDIA
Paramahansa Yogananda Path
Ranchi 834001, Jharkhand
Tel (0651) 2460071/72/73/74
+91 9431917444, +91 9431917555
www.yssbooks.org

Yogoda Satsanga Lessons

The *Yogoda Satsanga Lessons* are unique among Sri Sri Paramahansa Yogananda's published works in that they give his in-depth instruction in the practice of the highest yoga science of God-realization. That ancient science is embodied in the specific principles and meditation techniques of *Kriya Yoga*, often referred to in the pages of this book. In his commentary on the Bhagavad Gita (I:15–18), Sri Sri Paramahansa Yogananda wrote:

> *In a book available to the general public I cannot give the techniques themselves; for they are sacred, and certain ancient spiritual injunctions must first be followed to insure that they are received with reverence and confidentiality, and thereafter practiced correctly....In preparing the interpretation of the holy Bhagavad Gita, my intent and prayer is to awaken new hearts and minds to the physical, mental, and spiritual blessings available through right knowledge and application of the yoga science, and to encourage and hasten the progress of those devotees who are already steadfast on the yoga path.*

Lost to humanity for centuries during the dark ages (as described in his commentary on Bhagavad Gita IV:1), *Kriya Yoga* was revived in modern times by a line of enlightened masters—Mahavatar Babaji, Lahiri Mahasaya, Swami Sri Yukteswar, and Paramahansa Yogananda. To disseminate the liberating spiritual science worldwide through Yogoda Satsanga Society of India/Self-Realization Fellowship was the mission entrusted to Paramahansa Yogananda by his guru and *paramgurus*.

During his lifetime he travelled extensively, giving lectures and classes in India, the United States, and Europe. Yet he knew that many more than he could teach in person would be drawn to the yoga philosophy and practices. Thus he conceived "a series of weekly studies for the yoga seekers all over the world"—to perpetuate in their original purity, and in written form, the teachings handed down to him by his lineage of gurus.

The *Yogoda Satsanga Lessons* present the methods of concentration, energization, and meditation taught by Paramahansa Yogananda that are an integral part of the *Kriya Yoga* science. In addition, this comprehensive home-study series makes available the whole range of subjects covered by him during the thirty years that he lived and taught in the West—offering his inspiring and practical guidance for attaining balanced physical, mental, and spiritual well-being.

After a preliminary period of study and practice, students of the *Yogoda Satsanga Lessons* may request initiation in the advanced *Kriya Yoga* meditation technique described in this book.

Yogoda Satsanga Society of India is dedicated to freely assisting seekers. For information regarding spiritual discourses and classes, meditation and inspirational services at our centres, a schedule of retreats, and our spiritual, as well as our medical, educational, emergency relief, and other charitable activities, we invite you to visit our website.

Yogoda Satsanga Society of India
Paramahansa Yogananda Path,
Ranchi 834001, Jharkhand
Tel (0651) 2460071/72/73/74
+91 9431917444, +91 9431917555
www.ysslessons.org

Further information about the *Yogoda Satsanga Lessons* (also available in Hindi) is included in the free introductory literature, available on request.

> *Those who have come to Self-Realization Fellowship [Yogoda Satsanga Society of India] truly seeking inward spiritual help shall receive what they seek from God. Whether they come while I am in the body, or afterward, the power of God through the link of the SRF [YSS] Gurus shall flow into the devotees just the same, and shall be the cause of their salvation.*
>
> *—Sri Sri Paramahansa Yogananda*

Glossary

(The following succinct definitions are provided as a ready reference for the reader unfamiliar with Sanskrit terms and yoga philosophy as delineated in the teachings of Paramahansa Yogananda. Further discussions of the salient concepts can be located in the text by using the Index.)

Apara-Prakriti. See *Prakriti.*

Arjuna. The exalted disciple to whom Bhagavan Krishna imparted the immortal message of the Bhagavad Gita (*q.v.*); one of the five Pandava princes in the great Hindu epic, the *Mahabharata,* in which he is a key figure.

ashram. A spiritual hermitage; often a monastery.

astral body. Man's subtle body of light, *prana* or lifetrons; the second of three sheaths that successively encase the soul: the causal body (*q.v.*), the astral body, and the physical body. The powers of the astral body enliven the physical body, much as electricity illumines a bulb. The astral body has nineteen elements: intelligence, ego, feeling, mind (sense consciousness); five instruments of knowledge (the sensory powers within the physical organs of sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch); five instruments of action (the executive powers in the physical instruments of procreation, excretion, speech, locomotion, and the exercise of manual skill); and five instruments of life force that perform the functions of circulation, metabolization, assimilation, crystallization, and elimination.

astral light. The subtle light emanating from lifetrons (see *prana*); the structural essence of the astral world. Through the all-inclusive intuitive perception of the soul, devotees in concentrated states of meditation may perceive the astral light, particularly as the spiritual eye (*q.v.*).

astral world. The subtle sphere of the Lord's creation, a universe of light and colour composed of finer-than-atomic forces, i.e., vibrations of life energy or lifetrons (see *prana*). Every being, every object, every vibration on the material plane has an astral counterpart, for in the astral universe (heaven) is the blueprint of our material universe. At physical death, the soul of man, clothed in an astral body of light, ascends to one of the higher or lower astral planes, according to merit, to continue his spiritual evolution in the greater freedom of that subtle realm. There he remains for a karmically predetermined time until physical rebirth.

Aum (Om). The Sanskrit root word or seed-sound symbolizing that aspect of Godhead which creates and sustains all things; Cosmic Vibration. *Aum* of the Vedas became the sacred word *Hum* of the Tibetans; *Amin* of the Moslems; and *Amen* of the Egyptians, Greeks, Romans, Jews, and

Christians. The world's great religions state that all created things originate in the cosmic vibratory energy of *Aum* or Amen, the Word or Holy Ghost. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God....All things were made by him [the Word or *Aum*]; and without him was not any thing made that was made" (John 1:1, 3).

Amen in Hebrew means *sure, faithful.* "These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God" (Revelation 3:14). Even as sound is produced by the vibration of a running motor, so the omnipresent sound of *Aum* faithfully testifies to the running of the "Cosmic Motor," which upholds all life and every particle of creation through vibratory energy. In the *Yogoda Satsanga Lessons* (*q.v.*), Paramahansa Yogananda teaches techniques of meditation whose practice brings direct experience of God as *Aum* or Holy Ghost. That blissful communion with the invisible divine Power ("the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost"—John 14:26) is the truly scientific basis of prayer.

avatar. From the Sanskrit *avatara,* with roots *ava,* "down," and *tri,* "to pass." Souls who attain union with Spirit and then return to earth to help mankind are called *avatars,* divine incarnations.

avidya. Literally, "non-knowledge," ignorance; the manifestation in man of *maya,* the cosmic delusion (*q.v.*). Essentially, *avidya* is man's ignorance of his divine nature and of the sole reality: Spirit.

Babaji. See *Mahavatar Babaji.*

Bhagavad Gita. "Song of the Lord." An ancient Indian scripture consisting of eighteen chapters from the sixth book (*Bhishma Parva*) of the *Mahabharata* epic. Presented in the form of a dialogue between the avatar (*q.v.*) Lord Krishna and his disciple Arjuna on the eve of the historic battle of Kurukshetra, the Gita is a profound treatise on the science of yoga (union with God) and a timeless prescription for happiness and success in everyday living. The Gita is allegory as well as history, a spiritual dissertation on the inner battle between man's good and bad tendencies. Depending on the context, Krishna symbolizes the guru, the soul, or God; Arjuna represents the aspiring devotee. Of this universal scripture Mahatma Gandhi wrote: "Those who will meditate on the Gita will derive fresh joy and new meanings from it every day. There is not a single spiritual tangle which the Gita cannot unravel."

The quotations from the Bhagavad Gita in these *Second Coming* volumes are from Paramahansa Yogananda's own translation, *God Talks With Arjuna: The Bhagavad Gita — Royal Science of God-Realization* (published by Yogoda Satsanga Society of India).

Bhagavan Krishna. An avatar who lived as a king in India ages before the Christian era. One of the meanings given for the word *Krishna* in the Hindu scriptures is "Omniscient Spirit." Thus, *Krishna,* like *Christ,* is a spiritual title sig-

nifying the divine magnitude of the avatar—his oneness with God. The title *Bhagavan* means "Lord." In his early life, Krishna lived as a cowherd who enchanted his companions with the music of his flute. In this role Krishna is often considered to represent allegorically the soul playing the flute of meditation to guide all misled thoughts back to the fold of omniscience.

Bhakti Yoga. The spiritual approach to God that stresses all-surrendering love as the principal means for communion and union with God. See *Yoga*.

Brahma-Vishnu-Shiva. Three aspects of God's immanence in creation. They represent that triune function of the Christ Intelligence (*Tat*) that guides Cosmic Nature's activities of creation, preservation, and dissolution. See *Trinity*.

Brahman (Brahma). Absolute Spirit. Brahman is sometimes rendered in Sanskrit as *Brahma* (with a short *a* at the end); but the meaning is the same as Brahman: Spirit, or God the Father, not the circumscribed concept of the personal "Brahma-the-Creator" of the Brahma-Vishnu-Shiva triad (which is rendered with a long *â* at the end, *Brahmâ)*. See *Brahma-Vishnu-Shiva*.

breath. "The influx of innumerable cosmic currents into man by way of the breath induces restlessness in his mind," Paramahansa Yogananda wrote. "Thus the breath links him with the fleeting phenomenal worlds. To escape from the sorrows of transitoriness and to enter the blissful realm of Reality, the yogi learns to quiet the breath by scientific meditation."

caste. Caste in its original conception was not a hereditary status, but a classification based on man's natural capacities. In his evolution, man passes through four distinct grades, designated by ancient Hindu sages as *Sudra, Vaisya, Kshatriya,* and *Brahmin*. The *Sudra* is interested primarily in satisfying his bodily needs and desires; the work that best suits his state of development is bodily labour. The *Vaisya* is ambitious for worldly gain as well as for satisfaction of the senses; he has more creative ability than the *Sudra* and seeks occupation as a farmer, a businessman, an artist, or wherever his mental energy finds fulfilment. The *Kshatriya,* having through many lives fulfilled the desires of the *Sudra* and *Vaisya* states, begins to seek the meaning of life; he tries to overcome his bad habits, to control his senses, and to do what is right. *Kshatriyas* by occupation are noble rulers, statesmen, warriors. The *Brahmin* has overcome his lower nature, has a natural affinity for spiritual pursuits, and is God-knowing, able therefore to teach and help liberate others.

causal body. Essentially, man as a soul is a causal-bodied being. His causal body is an idea-matrix for the astral and physical bodies. The causal body is composed of thirty-five idea elements corresponding to the nineteen elements of the astral body (*q.v.*) plus the sixteen basic material elements of the physical body.

causal world. Behind the physical world of matter (atoms, protons, electrons), and the subtle astral world of luminous life energy (lifetrons), is the causal,

or ideational, world of thought (thoughtrons). After man evolves sufficiently to transcend the physical and astral universes, he resides in the causal universe. In the consciousness of causal beings, the physical and astral universes are resolved to their thought essence. Whatever physical man can do in imagination, causal man can do in actuality—the only limitation being thought itself. Ultimately, man sheds the last soul covering—his causal body—to unite with omnipresent Spirit, beyond all vibratory realms.

chakras. In Yoga, the seven occult centres of life and consciousness in the spine and brain, which enliven the physical and astral bodies of man. These centres are referred to as *chakras* ("wheels") because the concentrated energy in each one is like a hub from which radiate rays of life-giving light and energy. In ascending order, these *chakras* are *muladhara* (the coccygeal, at the base of the spine); *svadhisthana* (the sacral, two inches above *muladhara*); *manipura* (the lumbar, opposite the navel); *anahata* (the dorsal, opposite the heart); *vishuddha* (the cervical, at the base of the neck); *ajna* (traditionally located between the eyebrows; in actuality, directly connected by polarity with the medulla; see also *medulla* and *spiritual eye*); and *sahasrara* (in the uppermost part of the cerebrum).

The seven centres are divinely planned exits or "trapdoors" through which the soul has descended into the body and through which it must reascend by a process of meditation. By seven successive steps, the soul escapes into Cosmic Consciousness. In its conscious upward passage through the seven opened or "awakened" cerebrospinal centres, the soul travels the highway to the Infinite, the true path by which the soul must retrace its course to reunite with God.

Yoga treatises generally consider only the six lower centres as *chakras*, with *sahasrara* referred to separately as a seventh centre. All seven centres, however, are often referred to as lotuses, whose petals open, or turn upward, in spiritual awakening as the life and consciousness travel up the spine.

chitta. Intuitive feeling; the aggregate of consciousness, inherent in which is *ahamkara* (egoity), *buddhi* (intelligence), and *manas* (mind or sense consciousness).

Christ. The honorific title of Jesus: Jesus the Christ. This term also denotes God's universal intelligence immanent in creation (sometimes referred to as the Cosmic Christ or the Infinite Christ), or is used in reference to great masters who have attained oneness with that Divine Consciousness. (The Greek word *Christos* means "anointed," as does the Hebrew word *Messiah.)* See also *Christ Consciousness* and *Kutastha Chaitanya.*

Christ centre. The *Kutastha* or *ajna chakra* at the point between the eyebrows, directly connected by polarity with the medulla (*q.v.*); centre of will and concentration, and of Christ Consciousness (*q.v.*); seat of the spiritual eye (*q.v.*).

Christ Consciousness. The projected consciousness of God immanent in all creation. In Christian scripture, the "only begotten son," the only pure reflection in creation of God the Father; in Hindu scripture, *Kutastha Chaitanya* or *Tat,* the universal consciousness, or cosmic intelligence, of Spirit everywhere present in creation. (The terms "Christ Consciousness" and "Christ Intelligence" are synonymous, as also "Cosmic Christ" and "Infinite Christ.") It is the universal consciousness, oneness with God, manifested by Jesus, Krishna, and other avatars. Great saints and yogis know it as the state of *samadhi* meditation wherein their consciousness has become identified with the divine intelligence in every particle of creation; they feel the entire universe as their own body. See *Trinity.*

consciousness, states of. In mortal consciousness man experiences three states: waking consciousness, sleeping consciousness, and dreaming consciousness. But he does not experience his soul, superconsciousness, and he does not experience God. The Christ-man does. As mortal man is conscious throughout his body, so the Christ-man is conscious throughout the universe, which he feels as his body. Beyond the state of Christ consciousness is cosmic consciousness, the experience of oneness with God in His absolute consciousness beyond vibratory creation as well as with the Lord's omnipresence manifesting in the phenomenal worlds.

Cosmic Consciousness. The Absolute; transcendental Spirit existing beyond creation; God the Father. Also the *samadhi*-meditation state of oneness with God both beyond and within vibratory creation. See *Trinity.*

cosmic delusion. See *maya.*

cosmic energy. See *prana.*

Cosmic Intelligent Vibration. See *Aum.*

Cosmic Sound. See *Aum.*

dharma. Eternal principles of righteousness that uphold all creation; man's inherent duty to live in harmony with these principles. See also *Sanatana Dharma.*

diksha. Spiritual initiation; from the Sanskrit verb-root *diksh,* to dedicate oneself. See also *disciple* and *Kriya Yoga.*

disciple. A spiritual aspirant who comes to a guru seeking introduction to God, and to this end establishes an eternal spiritual relationship with the guru. In Yogoda Satsanga Society of India/Self-Realization Fellowship, the guru-disciple relationship is established by *diksha,* initiation, in *Kriya Yoga.* See also *guru* and *Kriya Yoga.*

Divine Mother. The aspect of God that is active in creation; the *shakti,* or power, of the Transcendent Creator. Other terms for this aspect of Divinity are *Aum, Shakti,* Holy Ghost, Cosmic Intelligent Vibration, Nature or *Prakriti.* Also, the personal aspect of God embodying the love and compassionate qualities of a mother.

The Hindu scriptures teach that God is both immanent and transcendent, personal and impersonal. He may be sought as the Absolute; as one of His manifest eternal qualities, such as love, wisdom, bliss, light; in the form of an *ishta* (deity); or as Father, Mother, or Friend.

egoism. The ego-principle, *ahamkara* (lit., "I do"), is the root cause of dualism or the seeming separation between man and his Creator. *Ahamkara* brings human beings under the sway of *maya* (*q.v.*), by which the subject (ego) falsely appears as object; the creatures imagine themselves to be creators. By banishing ego-consciousness, man awakens to his divine identity, his oneness with the Sole Life: God.

elements (five). The Cosmic Vibration, or *Aum,* structures all physical creation, including man's physical body, through the manifestation of five *tattvas* (elements): earth, water, fire, air, and ether (*q.v.*). These are structural forces, intelligent and vibratory in nature. Without the earth element there would be no state of solid matter; without the water element, no liquid state; without the air element, no gaseous state; without the fire element, no heat; without the ether element, no background on which to produce the cosmic motion-picture show. In the body, *prana* (cosmic vibratory energy) enters the medulla and is then divided into the five elemental currents by the action of the five lower *chakras* (*q.v.*), or centers: the coccygeal (earth), sacral (water), lumbar (fire), dorsal (air), and cervical (ether). The Sanskrit terminology for these elements is *prithivi, ap, tej, prana,* and *akasha.*

Energization Exercises. Man is surrounded by cosmic energy, much as a fish is surrounded by water. The Energization Exercises, originated by Paramahansa Yogananda and taught in *Yogoda Satsanga Lessons* (*q.v.*), enable man to recharge his body with this cosmic energy, or universal prana.

ether. The Sanskrit word *akaśa,* translated as both "ether" and "space," refers specifically to the vibratory element that is the subtlest in the material world. (See *elements.*) It derives from ā, "towards" and *kasha,* "to be visible, to appear." *Akasha* is the subtle "background" against which everything in the material universe becomes perceptible. "Space gives dimension to objects; ether separates the images," Paramahansa Yogananda said. "Ether-permeated space is the boundary line between heaven, or the astral world, and earth," he explained. "All the finer forces God has created are composed of light, or thought-forms, and are merely hidden behind a particular vibration that manifests as ether."

evil. The satanic force that obscures God's omnipresence in creation, manifesting as inharmonies in man and nature. Also, a broad term defining anything contrary to divine law (see *dharma*) that causes man to lose the consciousness of his essential unity with God, and that obstructs attainment of God-realization.

gospels. The word *gospel* comes from the Old English *godspel,* "good news." It has the same meaning as the Greek *evangelion*—literally a "good message" or "good tidings"—the word used for Jesus' teachings in Greek, the language in which the New Testament was originally written.

In the years immediately after Jesus' ascension, historians state, stories of his life circulated primarily by word of mouth; different communities of the evolving Christian movement had varying collections of narratives and sayings. Though Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection took place in A.D. 30, the first of the four canonical gospels (which most scholars believe to be Mark's) was not written until about forty years later. (Early Christians considered the Jewish scriptures to be their holy books; and, since many expected the imminent return of Jesus to earth, they apparently felt no need for additional written teachings. Though the first epistles, or pastoral letters, of the Apostle Paul were written around the year 50 or 52, no systematic narrative of Jesus' life and teachings was written until Mark's appeared around the year 70.)

Historians generally agree that both Matthew and Luke drew from Mark; and both of them, in addition, had access to material from other sources. Scholars attribute further differences in the content and emphasis of the four gospels, which were written at different times between A.D. 70 and 90, to the particular events and concerns faced by the independent Christian communities—some of Jewish ancestry, some of Gentile—scattered in different regions of the eastern Roman Empire as the movement gradually evolved from its Jewish roots to a fully separate religion. (The Gospel of Thomas, also cited herein, is thought to have been compiled during the same period as the four canonical gospels—within a few decades after Jesus' ascension.)

Regarding the authors of the four New Testament Gospels, Matthew and John, of course, are names of two of the original twelve apostles of Jesus. Mark, according to Papias, bishop of Hierapolis in Asia Minor (ca. 130), was the assistant and "interpreter" of Jesus' disciple Peter; and wrote down what he heard Peter relate about the sayings and deeds of Jesus. Luke is identified in early accounts as the travelling companion of Paul, who had personally known Peter, John, and Jesus' brother James. An overview of what historians know about the authorship of the Gospels may be found in *Three Gospels* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1997), by Duke University professor Reynolds Price.

gunas. The three attributes of Nature: *tamas, rajas,* and *sattva*—obstruction, activity, and expansion; or, mass, energy, and intelligence. In man the three *gunas* express themselves as ignorance or inertia; activity or struggle; and wisdom.

guru. Spiritual teacher. Though the word *guru* is often misused to refer simply to any teacher or instructor, a true God-illumined guru is one who, in his

attainment of self-mastery, has realized his identity with the omnipresent Spirit. Such a one is uniquely qualified to lead the seeker on his or her inward journey toward divine realization.

When a devotee is ready to seek God in earnest, the Lord sends him a guru. Through the wisdom, intelligence, Self-realization, and teachings of such a master, God guides the disciple. By following the master's teachings and discipline, the disciple is able to fulfil his soul's desire for the manna of God-perception. A true guru, ordained by God to help sincere seekers in response to their deep soul craving, is not an ordinary teacher: he is a human vehicle whose body, speech, mind, and spirituality God uses as a channel to attract and guide lost souls back to their home of immortality. A guru is a living embodiment of scriptural truth. He is an agent of salvation appointed by God in response to a devotee's demand for release from the bondage of matter.

"To keep company with the Guru," wrote Swami Sri Yukteswar in *The Holy Science,* "is not only to be in his physical presence (as this is sometimes impossible), but mainly means to keep him in our hearts and to be one with him in principle and to attune ourselves with him." See *master.*

Gurudeva. "Divine teacher," a customary Sanskrit term of respect that is used in addressing and referring to one's spiritual preceptor; sometimes rendered in English as "Master."

Gurus of Yogoda Satsanga Society of India. The Gurus of Yogoda Satsanga Society of India/Self-Realization Fellowship are Jesus Christ, Bhagavan Krishna, and a line of exalted masters of contemporary times: Mahavatar Babaji, Lahiri Mahasaya, Swami Sri Yukteswar, and Paramahansa Yogananda. To show the harmony and essential unity of the teachings of Jesus Christ and the Yoga precepts of Bhagavan Krishna is an integral part of the YSS/SRF dispensation. All of these Gurus, by their universal teachings and divine instrumentality, contribute to the fulfilment of the Yogoda Satsanga Society of India mission of bringing to humanity a practical spiritual science of God-realization.

The passing of a guru's spiritual mantle to a disciple designated to carry on the lineage to which that guru belongs is termed *guru-parampara.* Thus Paramahansa Yogananda's direct lineage of gurus is Mahavatar Babaji, Lahiri Mahasaya, and Swami Sri Yukteswar.

Before his passing Paramahansaji stated that it was God's wish that he be the last in the Yogoda Satsanga Society of India line of Gurus. No succeeding disciple or leader in his society will ever assume the title of guru. "When I am gone," he said, "the teachings will be the guru....Through the teachings you will be in tune with me and the great Gurus who sent me."

When questioned about the succession of the presidency of Yogoda Satsanga Society of India/Self-Realization Fellowship, Paramahansaji stated: "There will always be at the head of this organisation men and

women of realization. They are already known to God and the Gurus. They shall serve as my spiritual successor and representative in all spiritual and organisational matters."

Hinduism. See *Sanatana Dharma.*

Holy Ghost. The sacred Cosmic Intelligent Vibration projected from God to structure and sustain creation from Its own vibratory Essence. It is thus the Holy Presence of God, His Word, omnipresent in the universe and in every form, vehicle of God's perfect universal reflection, Christ Consciousness (*q.v.*). The Comforter, Cosmic Mother Nature, Prakriti (*q.v.*). See *Aum* and *Trinity.*

"Holy Ghost" is synonymous with "Holy Spirit"—the term used in many modern English versions of the Bible. Both are translations of the same Greek and Hebrew words. *Ruach* in Hebrew and *pneuma* in Greek are used to signify a range of concepts: spirit, breath, and wind—in general, the life principle of man and the cosmos. (Similarly in Latin, in which *inspiration* refers to the inflow of breath as well as of divine or creative spirit; and in Sanskrit, in which *prana* denotes the breath as well as the subtle astral life energy that sustains the body, and the universal Cosmic Vibratory Energy that underlies and upholds every particle of creation.) At the time of the King James translation of the Bible, both "spirit" and "ghost" in English conveyed the same meaning as *ruach* and *pneuma;* the everyday connotation of "ghost" has changed in the centuries since then. The King James rendering, used in this book, avoids confusion between Spirit (the transcendental God the Father) and Its activating Creative Vibratory Energy (Holy Ghost).

intuition. The all-knowing faculty of the soul, which enables man to experience direct perception of truth without the intermediary of the senses.

ji. A suffix denoting respect, added to names and titles in India; as, Gandhiji, Paramahansaji, Guruji.

Jnana Yoga. (Pronounced *gyana yoga*). The path to union with God through transmutation of the discriminative power of the intellect into the omniscient wisdom of the soul.

karma. Effects of past actions, from this or previous lifetimes; from the Sanskrit *kri,* to do. The equilibrating law of karma, as expounded in the Hindu scriptures, is that of action and reaction, cause and effect, sowing and reaping. In the course of natural righteousness, each man by his thoughts and actions becomes the molder of his destiny. Whatever energies he himself, wisely or unwisely, has set in motion must return to him as their starting point, like a circle inexorably completing itself. An understanding of karma as the law of justice serves to free the human mind from resentment against God and man. A man's karma follows him from incarnation to incarnation until fulfilled or spiritually transcended. See *reincarnation.*

The cumulative actions of human beings within communities, nations, or the world as a whole constitute mass karma, which produces local or far-ranging effects according to the degree and preponderance of good or evil. The thoughts and actions of every man, therefore, contribute to the good or ill of this world and all peoples in it.

Karma Yoga. The path to God through nonattached action and service. By selfless service, by giving the fruits of one's actions to God, and by seeing God as the sole Doer, the devotee becomes free of the ego and experiences God. See *Yoga*.

Krishna. See *Bhagavan Krishna*.

Krishna Consciousness. Christ Consciousness; *Kutastha Chaitanya*. See *Christ Consciousness*.

Kriya Yoga. A sacred spiritual science, originating millenniums ago in India. It includes certain techniques of meditation whose devoted practise leads to realization of God. Paramahansa Yogananda has explained that the Sanskrit root of *kriya* is *kri,* to do, to act and react; the same root is found in the word *karma,* the natural principle of cause and effect. *Kriya Yoga* is thus "union (*yoga*) with the Infinite through a certain action or rite (*kriya*)." *Kriya Yoga* is praised by Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita and by Patanjali in the *Yoga Sutras*. Revived in this age by Mahavatar Babaji (*q.v.*), *Kriya Yoga* is the *diksha* (spiritual initiation) bestowed by the Gurus of Yogoda Satsanga Society of India. Since the *mahasamadhi* (*q.v.*) of Paramahansa Yogananda, *diksha* is conferred through his appointed spiritual representative, the president of Yogoda Satsanga Society of India/Self-Realization Fellowship (or through one appointed by the president). To qualify for *diksha* Yogoda Satsanga members must fulfil certain preliminary spiritual requirements. One who has received this *diksha* is a *Kriya Yogi* or *Kriyaban*. See also *guru* and *disciple*.

kundalini. The powerful current of creative life energy residing in a subtle coiled passageway at the base of the spine. In ordinary waking consciousness, the body's life force flows from the brain down the spine and out through this coiled *kundalini* passage, enlivening the physical body and tying the astral and causal bodies (*qq.v.*) and the indwelling soul to the mortal form. In the higher states of consciousness that are the goal of meditation, the *kundalini* energy is reversed to flow back up the spine to awaken the dormant spiritual faculties in the cerebrospinal centres (*chakras*). Also called the "serpent force," because of its coiled configuration.

Kutastha Chaitanya. Christ Consciousness (*q.v.*). The Sanskrit word *kutastha* means "that which remains unchanged"; *chaitanya* means "consciousness."

Lahiri Mahasaya. *Lahiri* was the family name of Shyama Charan Lahiri (1828–1895). *Mahasaya,* a Sanskrit religious title, means "large-minded." Lahiri Mahasaya was a disciple of Mahavatar Babaji, and the guru of Swami Sri Yukteswar (Paramahansa Yogananda's guru). Lahiri Mahasaya was the

one to whom Babaji revealed the ancient, almost-lost science of *Kriya Yoga* (*q.v.*). A *Yogavatar* ("Incarnation of Yoga"), he was a seminal figure in the renaissance of yoga in modern India who gave instruction and blessing to countless seekers who came to him, without regard to caste or creed. He was a Christlike teacher with miraculous powers; but also a family man with business responsibilities, who demonstrated for the modern world how an ideally balanced life can be achieved by combining meditation with right performance of outer duties. Lahiri Mahasaya's life is described in *Autobiography of a Yogi*.

life force. See *prana*.

lifetrons. See *prana*.

mahasamadhi. Sanskrit *maha*, "great," *samadhi*. The last meditation, or conscious communion with God, during which a perfected master merges himself in the cosmic *Aum* and casts off the physical body. A master invariably knows beforehand the time God has appointed for him to leave his bodily residence. See *samadhi*.

Mahavatar Babaji. The deathless *Mahavatar* ("great avatar") who in 1861 gave *Kriya Yoga* (*q.v.*) initiation to Lahiri Mahasaya, and thereby restored to the world the ancient technique of salvation. Perennially youthful, he has lived for centuries in the Himalayas, bestowing a constant blessing on the world. His mission has been to assist prophets in carrying out their special dispensations. Many titles signifying his exalted spiritual stature have been given to him, but the *mahavatar* has generally adopted the simple name of Babaji, from the Sanskrit *baba,* "father," and the suffix *ji,* denoting respect. More information about his life and spiritual mission is given in *Autobiography of a Yogi*. See *avatar*.

man. The word is derived from the same root as Sanskrit *manas,* mind—the uniquely human capacity for rational thought. The science of yoga deals with human consciousness from the point of view of the essentially androgynous Self (*atman*). As there is no other terminology in English that would convey these psychological and spiritual truths without excessive literary awkwardness, the use of *man* and related terms has been retained in this publication—not in the narrowly exclusive sense of the word *man*, denoting only half of the human race, but in its broader original meaning.

Mantra Yoga. Divine communion attained through devotional, concentrated repetition of root-word sounds that have a spiritually beneficial vibratory potency. See *Yoga*.

master. One who has achieved self-mastery. Also, a respectful term of address for one's guru (*q.v.*).

Paramahansa Yogananda has pointed out that "the distinguishing qualifications of a master are not physical but spiritual....Proof that one is a master is supplied only by the ability to enter at will the breathless state

(*savikalpa samadhi*) and by the attainment of immutable bliss (*nirvikalpa samadhi*)." See *samadhi*.

Paramahansaji further states: "All scriptures proclaim that the Lord created man in His omnipotent image. Control over the universe appears to be supernatural, but in truth such power is inherent and natural in everyone who attains 'right remembrance' of his divine origin. Men of God-realization...are devoid of the ego-principle (*ahamkara*) and its uprisings of personal desires; the actions of true masters are in effortless conformity with *rita,* natural righteousness. In Emerson's words, all great ones become 'not virtuous, but Virtue; then is the end of the creation answered, and God is well pleased.'"

maya. The delusory power inherent in the structure of creation, by which the One appears as many. *Maya* is the principle of relativity, inversion, contrast, duality, oppositional states; the "Satan" (lit., in Hebrew, "the adversary") of the Old Testament prophets; and the "devil" whom Christ described picturesquely as a "murderer" and a "liar," because "there is no truth in him" (John 8:44).

Paramahansa Yogananda wrote: "The Sanskrit word *maya* means 'the measurer'; it is the magical power in creation by which limitations and divisions are apparently present in the Immeasurable and Inseparable. *Maya* is Nature herself—the phenomenal worlds, ever in transitional flux as antithesis to Divine Immutability.

"In God's plan and play (*lila*), the sole function of Satan or *maya* is to attempt to divert man from Spirit to matter, from Reality to unreality. 'The devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil' (I John 3:8). That is, the manifestation of Christ Consciousness, within man's own being, effortlessly destroys the illusions or 'works of the devil.'

"*Maya* is the veil of transitoriness in Nature, the ceaseless becoming of creation; the veil that each man must lift in order to see behind it the Creator, the changeless Immutable, eternal Reality."

meditation. Generally, interiorized concentration with the objective of perceiving God. True meditation, *dhyana,* is conscious realization of God through intuitive perception. It is achieved only after the devotee has attained that fixed concentration whereby he disconnects his attention from the senses and is completely undisturbed by sensory impressions from the outer world. *Dhyana* is the seventh step of Patanjali's Eightfold Path of Yoga, the eighth step being *samadhi,* communion, oneness with God. See *Patanjali*.

medulla oblongata. This structure at the base of the brain (top of the spinal cord) is the principal point of entry of life force (*prana*) into the body. It is the seat of the sixth cerebrospinal centre, whose function is to receive and direct the incoming flow of cosmic energy. The life force is stored in the

seventh centre (*sahasrara*) in the topmost part of the brain. From that reservoir it is distributed throughout the body. The subtle centre at the medulla is the main switch that controls the entrance, storage, and distribution of the life force.

paramahansa. A spiritual title signifying a master (*q.v.*). It may be conferred only by a true guru on a qualified disciple. *Paramahansa* literally means "supreme swan." In the Hindu scriptures, the *hansa* or swan symbolizes spiritual discrimination. Swami Sri Yukteswar bestowed the title on his beloved disciple Yogananda in 1935.

Patanjali. Renowned exponent of yoga, a sage of ancient times, whose *Yoga Sutras* outline the principles of the yogic path, dividing it into eight steps: (1) moral proscriptions (*yama*), (2) right observances (*niyama*), (3) meditation posture (*asana*), (4) life-force control (*pranayama*), (5) interiorization of the mind (*pratyahara*), (6) concentration (*dharana*), (7) meditation (*dhyana*), (8) union with God (*samadhi*).

Prakriti. Cosmic Nature; in general, the intelligent, creative vibratory power projected out of Spirit that both objectifies and becomes the triune manifestation (causal, astral, and physical) of the universe and the microcosm of man.

Specifically designated: *Maha-Prakriti* is the primal Undifferentiated Creative Intelligence of God, Creative Mother Nature or Holy Ghost, that through Cosmic Vibration of Its own Self brings into manifestation all creation. *Para-Prakriti* (Pure Nature) and *Apara-Prakriti* (Impure Nature) correlate with the Christian terminologies of *Holy Ghost* and *Satan*—respectively, the creative power that expresses the immanence of God's vibratory Presence in creation, and the dark power of cosmic delusion that obscures the Divine Omnipresence.

prana. Sparks of intelligent finer-than-atomic energy that constitute life, collectively referred to in Hindu scriptural treatises as *prana,* which Paramahansa Yogananda has translated as "lifetrons." In essence, condensed thoughts of God; substance of the astral world (*q.v.*) and life principle of the physical cosmos. In the physical world, there are two kinds of *prana:* (1) the cosmic vibratory energy that is omnipresent in the universe, structuring and sustaining all things; (2) the specific *prana* or energy that pervades and sustains each human body through five currents or functions. *Prana* current performs the function of crystallization; *vyana* current, circulation; *samana* current, assimilation; *udana* current, metabolism; and *apana* current, elimination.

pranayama. Conscious control of *prana* (the creative vibration or energy that activates and sustains life in the body). The yoga science of *pranayama* is the direct way to consciously disconnect the mind from the life functions and sensory perceptions that tie man to body consciousness. *Pranayama*

thus frees man's consciousness to commune with God. All scientific techniques that bring about union of soul and Spirit may be classified as yoga, and *pranayama* is the greatest yogic method for attaining this divine union.

Raja Yoga. The "royal" or highest path to God-union. It teaches scientific meditation (*q.v.*) as the ultimate means for realizing God, and includes the highest essentials from all other forms of Yoga. The Yogoda Satsanga Society of India *Raja Yoga* teachings outline a way of life leading to perfect unfoldment in body, mind, and soul, based on the foundation of *Kriya Yoga* (*q.v.*) meditation. See *yoga*.

Rajarsi Janakananda (James J. Lynn). Exalted disciple of Paramahansa Yogananda, and first successor to him as president and spiritual head of Yogoda Satsanga Society of India/Self-Realization Fellowship until his passing on February 20, 1955. Mr. Lynn first received *Kriya Yoga* initiation from Paramahansaji in 1932; his spiritual advancement was so swift that the Guru lovingly referred to him as "Saint Lynn," until bestowing on him the monastic title of Rajarsi Janakananda in 1951.

reincarnation. The doctrine that human beings, compelled by the law of evolution, incarnate repeatedly in progressively higher lives—retarded by wrong actions and desires, and advanced by spiritual endeavours—until Self-realization and God-union are attained. Having thus transcended the limitations and imperfections of mortal consciousness, the soul is forever freed from compulsory reincarnation. "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out" (Revelation 3:12).

rishis. Seers, exalted beings who manifest divine wisdom; especially, the illumined sages of ancient India to whom the Vedas were intuitively revealed.

sadhana. Path of spiritual discipline. The specific instruction and meditation practices prescribed by the guru for his disciples, who by faithfully following them ultimately realize God.

samadhi. The highest step on the Eightfold Path of Yoga, as outlined by the sage Patanjali (*q.v.*). *Samadhi* is attained when the meditator, the process of meditation (by which the mind is withdrawn from the senses by interiorization), and the object of meditation (God) become One. Paramahansa Yogananda has explained that "in the initial states of God-communion (*savikalpa samadhi*) the devotee's consciousness merges in the Cosmic Spirit; his life force is withdrawn from the body, which appears 'dead,' or motionless and rigid. The yogi is fully aware of his bodily condition of suspended animation. As he progresses to higher spiritual states (*nirvikalpa samadhi*), however, he communes with God without bodily fixation; and in his ordinary waking consciousness, even in the midst of exacting worldly duties." Both states are characterized by oneness with the ever new bliss of Spirit, but the *nirvikalpa* state is experienced by only the most highly advanced masters.

Sanatana Dharma. Literally, "eternal religion." The name given to the body of Vedic teachings that came to be called Hinduism after the Greeks designated the people on the banks of the river Indus as *Indoos,* or *Hindus.* See *dharma.*

Satan. Literally, in Hebrew, "the adversary." Satan is the conscious and independent universal force that keeps everything and everybody deluded with the unspiritual consciousness of finiteness and separateness from God. To accomplish this, Satan uses the weapons of *maya* (cosmic delusion) and *avidya* (individual delusion, ignorance). See *maya.*

Sat-Chit-Ananda. Sanskrit term for God that expresses the essential nature of Spirit as eternal Being or Truth (*Sat*), infinite consciousness (*Chit*), and ever new Bliss (*Ananda*).

Sat-Tat-Aum. *Sat,* Truth, the Absolute, Bliss; *Tat,* universal intelligence or consciousness; *Aum,* cosmic intelligent creative vibration, word-symbol for God. See *Aum* and *Trinity.*

Self. Capitalized to denote the *atman* or soul, as distinguished from the ordinary self, which is the personality or ego (*q.v.*). The Self is individualized Spirit, whose nature is ever-existing, ever-conscious, ever-new joy. Experience of these divine qualities of the soul's nature is achieved through meditation.

Self-realization. Paramahansa Yogananda has defined Self-realization as "the knowing—in body, mind, and soul—that we are one with the omnipresence of God; that we do not have to pray that it come to us, that we are not merely near it at all times, but that God's omnipresence is our omnipresence; that we are just as much a part of Him now as we ever will be. All we have to do is improve our knowing."

Self-Realization. An abbreviated way of referring to Self-Realization Fellowship, the society founded by Paramahansa Yogananda, often used by him in informal talks; e.g. "the Self-Realization teachings"; "Self-Realization headquarters in Los Angeles"; etc.

Self-Realization Fellowship. The international nonsectarian religious society founded by Paramahansa Yogananda in the United States in 1920 (and as Yogoda Satsanga Society of India in 1917) to disseminate worldwide the spiritual principles and meditation techniques of *Kriya Yoga,* and to foster greater understanding among people of all races, cultures, and creeds of the one Truth underlying all religions.

Paramahansa Yogananda has explained that the name Self-Realization Fellowship signifies "fellowship with God through Self-realization, and friendship with all truth-seeking souls."

From its international headquarters in Los Angeles, the society publishes Paramahansa Yogananda's writings, lectures, and informal talks—including his comprehensive series of *Self-Realization Fellowship Lessons*

for home study and *Self-Realization,* the magazine he founded in 1925; produces audio and video recordings on his teachings; oversees its temples, retreats, meditation centers, youth programs, and the monastic communities of the Self-Realization Order; conducts lecture and class series in cities around the world; and coordinates the Worldwide Prayer Circle, a network of groups and individuals dedicated to praying for those in need of physical, mental, or spiritual aid and for global peace and harmony.

Yogoda Satsanga Lessons. The teachings of Paramahansa Yogananda, sent to students throughout the world in a series of lessons, available to all earnest truth-seekers. These lessons contain the yoga meditation techniques taught by Paramahansa Yogananda, including, for those who qualify, *Kriya Yoga* (*q.v.*).

Yogoda Satsanga Society of India/Self-Realization Fellowship Monastic Order. Paramahansa Yogananda wrote (in his commentary on Bhagavad Gita VI:1): "For those on the path I have followed who also feel called to complete renunciation in a life of seeking and serving God through the yoga ideals of meditative and dutiful activities, I have perpetuated in the monastic order of Yogoda Satsanga Society of India/Self-Realization Fellowship the line of *sannyas* in the Shankara Order, which I entered when I received the holy vows of a swami from my Guru. The organisational work that God and my Guru and *Paramgurus* have started through me is carried on not by worldly hired employees, but by those who have dedicated their lives to the highest objectives of renunciation and love for God."

Monks and nuns of the Order reside in the society's ashram centres and serve Paramahansa Yogananda's worldwide work in many capacities, including: conducting Yogoda Satsanga Society of India/Self-Realization Fellowship temple services, retreats, classes, and other spiritual and ministerial functions; providing individual counsel to Yogoda Satsanga Society of India/Self-Realization Fellowship students on their practice of Paramahansa Yogananda's teachings and techniques.

Yogoda Satsanga Magazine. A quarterly journal published by Yogoda Satsanga Society of India, featuring the talks and writings of Sri Sri Paramahansa Yogananda; and containing other spiritual, practical, and informative articles of current interest and lasting value.

Shankara, Swami. Sometimes referred to as Adi ("the first") Shankaracharya (Shankara + *acharya,* "teacher"); India's most illustrious philosopher. His date is uncertain; many scholars assign him to the eighth or early ninth century. He expounded God not as a negative abstraction, but as positive, eternal, omnipresent, ever new Bliss. Shankara reorganised the ancient Swami Order, and founded four great *maths* (monastic centres of spiritual education), whose leaders in apostolic succession bear the title of Jagadguru Sri Shankaracharya. The meaning of *Jagadguru* is "world teacher."

siddha. Literally, "one who is successful." One who has attained Self-realization.

soul. Individualized Spirit. The soul is the true and immortal nature of man, and of all living forms of life; it is cloaked only temporarily in the garments of causal, astral, and physical bodies. The nature of the soul is Spirit: ever-existing, ever-conscious, ever-new Joy.

spiritual eye. The single eye of intuition and omnipresent perception at the Christ (*Kutastha*) centre (*ajna chakra*) between the eyebrows. The deeply meditating devotee beholds the spiritual eye as a ring of golden light encircling a sphere of opalescent blue, and at the centre, a pentagonal white star. Microcosmically, these forms and colours epitomize, respectively, the vibratory realm of creation (Cosmic Nature, Holy Ghost); the Son or intelligence of God in creation (Christ Consciousness); and the vibrationless Spirit beyond all creation (God the Father).

The spiritual eye is the entryway into the ultimate states of divine consciousness. In deep meditation, as the devotee's consciousness penetrates the spiritual eye, into the three realms epitomized therein, he experiences successively the following states: superconsciousness or the ever new joy of soul realization, and oneness with God as *Aum* (*q.v.*) or Holy Ghost; Christ consciousness, oneness with the universal intelligence of God in all creation; and cosmic consciousness, unity with the omnipresence of God that is beyond as well as within vibratory manifestation. See also *consciousness, states of; superconsciousness; Christ Consciouness.*

Explaining a passage from Ezekiel (43:1–2), Paramahansa Yogananda has written: "Through the divine eye in the forehead, ('the east'), the yogi sails his consciousness into omnipresence, hearing the word or *Aum,* the divine sound of 'many waters': the vibrations of light that constitute the sole reality of creation." In Ezekiel's words: "Afterwards he brought me to the gate, even the gate that looketh towards the east; and behold, the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the east; and His voice was like the noise of many waters; and the earth shined with His glory."

Jesus also spoke of the spiritual eye: "When thine eye is single, thy whole body also is full of light....Take heed therefore that the light which is in thee be not darkness" (Luke 11:34-35).

Sri. A title of respect. When used before the name of a religious person, it means "holy" or "revered."

Sri Yukteswar, Swami. Swami Sri Yukteswar Giri (1855–1936), India's *Jnanavatar,* "Incarnation of Wisdom"; guru of Paramahansa Yogananda, and *paramguru* of Self-Realization Fellowship *Kriyaban* members. Sri Yukteswarji was a disciple of Lahiri Mahasaya. At the behest of Lahiri Mahasaya's guru, Mahavatar Babaji, he wrote *The Holy Science,* a treatise on the underlying unity of Christian and Hindu scriptures, and trained Paramahansa Yogananda for his spiritual world-mission: the dissemination

of *Kriya Yoga* (*q.v.*). Paramahansaji has lovingly described Sri Yukteswarji's life in *Autobiography of a Yogi.*

superconscious mind. The all-knowing power of the soul that perceives truth directly; intuition.

superconsciousness. The pure, intuitive, all-seeing, ever blissful consciousness of the soul. Sometimes used generally to refer to all the various states of *samadhi* (*q.v.*) experienced in meditation, but specifically the first state of *samadhi,* wherein one drops ego-consciousness and realizes his self as soul, made in the image of God. Thence follow the higher states of realization: Christ consciousness and cosmic consciousness (*qq.v.*).

swami. A member of India's most ancient monastic order, reorganised in the ninth century by Swami Shankara (*q.v.*). A swami takes formal vows of celibacy and renunciation of worldly ties and ambitions; he devotes himself to meditation and other spiritual practices, and to service to humanity. There are ten classificatory titles of the venerable Swami Order, as *Giri, Puri, Bharati, Tirtha, Saraswati,* and others. Swami Sri Yukteswar (*q.v.*) and Paramahansa Yogananda belonged to the *Giri* ("mountain") branch. The Sanskrit word *swami* means "he who is one with the Self (*Swa*)."

Trinity. When Spirit manifests creation, It becomes the Trinity: Father, Son, Holy Ghost, or *Sat, Tat, Aum.* The Father (*Sat*) is God as the Creator existing beyond creation (Cosmic Consciousness). The Son (*Tat*) is God's omnipresent intelligence existing in creation (Christ Consciousness or *Kutastha Chaitanya*). The Holy Ghost (*Aum*) is the vibratory power of God that objectifies and becomes creation.

Many cycles of cosmic creation and dissolution have come and gone in Eternity (see *yuga*). At the time of cosmic dissolution, the Trinity and all other relativities of creation resolve into the Absolute Spirit.

Upanishads. The Upanishads or *Vedanta* (lit., "end of the Vedas"), which occur in certain parts of the four Vedas, are essential summaries that form the doctrinal basis of the Hindu religion.

Vedanta. Literally, "end of the Vedas"; the philosophy stemming from the Upanishads, or latter portion of the Vedas. Shankara (eighth or early ninth century) was the chief exponent of Vedanta, which declares that God is the only reality and that creation is essentially an illusion. As man is the only creature capable of conceiving of God, man himself must be divine, and his duty therefore is to realize his true nature.

Vedas. The four scriptural texts of the Hindus: Rig Veda, Sama Veda, Yajur Veda, and Atharva Veda. They are essentially a literature of chant, ritual, and recitation for vitalizing and spiritualizing all phases of man's life and activity. Among the immense texts of India, the Vedas (Sanskrit root *vid,* "to know") are the only writings to which no author is ascribed. The Rig Veda assigns a celestial origin to the hymns and tells us they have come

down from "ancient times," reclothed in new language. Divinely revealed from age to age to the *rishis*, "seers," the four Vedas are said to possess *nityatva*, "timeless finality."

Yoga. From Sanskrit *yuj*, "union." The highest connotation of the word *yoga* in Hindu philosophy is union of the individual soul with Spirit through scientific methods of meditation. Within the larger spectrum of Hindu philosophy, Yoga is one of six orthodox systems: *Vedanta*, *Mimamsa*, *Sankhya*, *Vaisesika*, *Nyaya*, and *Yoga*. There are also various types of yoga methods: *Hatha Yoga*, *Mantra Yoga*, *Laya Yoga*, *Karma Yoga*, *Jnana Yoga*, *Bhakti Yoga*, and *Raja Yoga*. *Raja Yoga*, the "royal" or complete yoga, is that which is taught by Yogoda Satsanga Society of India, and which Bhagavan Krishna extols to his disciple Arjuna in the Bhagavad Gita: "The yogi is greater than body-disciplining ascetics, greater even than the followers of the path of wisdom or of the path of action; be thou, O Arjuna, a yogi!" (Bhagavad Gita VI:46). The sage Patanjali, foremost exponent of Yoga, has outlined eight definite steps by which the *Raja Yogi* attains *samadhi*, or union with God. These are (1) *yama*, moral conduct; (2) *niyama*, religious observances; (3) *asana*, right posture; (4) *pranayama*, control of prana, subtle life currents; (5) *pratyahara*, interiorization, withdrawal of the senses from external objects; (6) *dharana*, concentration, (7) *dhyana*, meditation; and (8) *samadhi*, superconscious experience; union with God.

yogi. One who practises Yoga (*q.v.*). Anyone who practises a scientific technique for divine realization is a yogi. He may be either married or unmarried, either a man of worldly responsibilities or one dedicated to formal religious vows.

Yogoda Satsanga Society of India. The name by which Sri Sri Paramahansa Yogananda's society is known in India. The Society was founded in 1917 by Paramahansa Yogananda. Its headquarters, Yogoda Math, is situated on the banks of the Ganges at Dakshineswar, near Kolkata. Yogoda Satsanga Society has a branch *math* at Ranchi, Jharkhand (formerly Bihar), and many branch centres. In addition to Yogoda meditation centres throughout India, there are twenty-five educational institutions, from primary through college level. *Yogoda*, a word coined by Paramahansa Yogananda, is derived from *yoga*, union, harmony, equilibrium; and *da*, that which imparts. *Satsanga* is composed of *sat*, truth, and *sanga*, fellowship. For the West, Sri Yogananda translated the Indian name as "Self-Realization Fellowship."

yuga. A cycle or subperiod of creation, outlined in ancient Hindu texts. Sri Yukteswar (*q.v.*) describes in *The Holy Science* a 24,000-year Equinoctial Cycle and mankind's present place in it. This cycle occurs within the much longer universal cycle of the ancient texts, as calculated by the *rishis* of aeons past and discussed in *Autobiography of a Yogi*, Chapter 16.

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